THE NAKED GOSPEL.

DISCOVERING

I. What was the Gospel which our LORD and His Apostles Preached.

II. What Additions and Alterations latter Ages have made in it.

III. What Advantages and Damages have thereupon ensued.

PART I. *Of FAITH.*

By a true Son of the Church of England.

Printed in the Year 1690.

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THE PREFACE.

THAT the Goſpel, which at its firſt appearance in the World made ſuch great and ſpeedy Conqueſts over its oppoſite Powers, ſhould in theſe latter Ages be ſo far from making ſuch large ſtrides, yea, or the leaſt ſtep of further progreſs, that it hath been driven out of many of the Provinces it had gained; this is by Some objected againſt the Providence of God, and the Truth of the Goſpel, and by the Beſt look't upon with wonder.

Time was, when the Father and Apologiſts of the Chriſtian Churches pleaded This for an Evidence of our Lord's being the true Meſſiah, that in him the Promiſe was fulfilled, which gave him the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for his poſſeſſion. And particularly St. Auguſtine thus argued for the Truth of his Reſurrection, the Corner-ſtone of the Chriſtian Faith: The ſame Spirit of God which foretold the Reſurrection of Chriſt, foretold alſo, that the Doctrine thereof ſhould be publickly profeſſed and believed in the World: and One was altogether as unlikely as the Other: but the Latter we ſee in all Ages ſince Chriſt's Death accompliſhed, why then ſhould we doubt of the Former?

And if we duly conſider how incredible it was, that a poor, deſpiſed, perſecuted, and at laſt crucified vagabond, ſhould by the preaching of a few Fiſhermen, ſo prevail over the oppoſite Powers of the World, that the greateſt Princes ſhould place his Croſs above their Crowns as their beſt Ornament and protection; This ſingly conſidered, muſt claim a belief, that as it is marvelous in our eyes, ſo it was the Lord's doing. If from the Power of the Sword we paſs that of the Pen, and conſider, that Twelve ignorant Fiſhermen baffled the celebrated Learning of the Scribes among the Jews, and the Philoſophers among the Greeks; Theſe Triumphs of the Ignorant over the Learned, will appear no leſs admirable than thoſe of the Poor over Princes: And when to this doubly wonderful Event, we add the no leſs wonderful Prediction, which at the time of its publication muſt appear no leſs Mad than now Miraculous; it muſt ſeem equally incredible that this concourſe of ſo many wonders, ſhould be the effect of leſs than Divine Power and Wiſdom: and conſequently Such a Prophecy So fulfilled, muſt evidence the Author to be what he declared himſelf, the Son of God.

YET ſhould one of Mahomet's Prieſts now mount the ſame Chair, might he not with (at leaſt) the ſame Force, preſs the ſame Argument in behalf of that lewd Impoſtor? Might he not argue, that the wonderful Progreſs of the Goſpel was indeed a powerful Evidence of its Divine Authority; but withal it muſt be an equally powerful one for that of the Alcoran. For as the miraculous Victories of a fugitive people over the Canaanites, join'd with the Prophecies which foretold them, were a good Evidence of the Divine Authority of Moſes and his Laws; and the Victories of the Goſpel over that Law, were an Evidence of the greater Authority of the Goſpel; ſo the Victories of the Alcoran over that Goſpel muſt be an Evidence, that as the Religion of Moſes was better than that of the Canaanites, and the Religion of Chriſt better than that of Moſes; ſo muſt the Religion of Mahomet be better than that of Chriſt.

Thus may a Mahometan either diſarm us of St. Auguſtin's Argument, or Retort it againſt us: For either it is of no force at all, or of ſo much more force for Mahomet, by how much more he hath prevailed over the Churches of Chriſt.

AND that it is of no force at all, ſome may infer from the contrary conducts, of the Planters of thoſe two Religions: For the Goſpel ſhed no Blood but of its own Profeſſors; kindled no fires but thoſe that devoured its own Martyrs; dethroned no Prince but the Prince of the Power of the Air, nor Him neither by any other Weapons but Preaching and Suffering: Whereas Mahomet and his Followers propagated his Doctrines, together with their Dominions, by Fire and Sword: And ſince this latter way is no leſs contrary to the Nature of God, than to the Precepts, as well as the way of Planting of the Goſpel; ſince its Author was no other than a lewd brainſick Scoundrel, and his Doctrines (as far as they are His) no better than extravagant Whimſies, or lewd Panders to Luſt: Such a progreſs of Such a Religion, is ſo far from an Argument of its Divine Authority, that it is far leſs impious to impute its proſperity, either to meer Chance, or (as ſome Aſtrological Fancies do) to the motion of the Heavens, (carrying Religion and Learning from the Eaſtern to the Weſtern Regions of the World) than to accuſe God's Providence of Injuſtice to his Truth, and the Souls of the Inhabitants of ſo great a part of Chriſtendom.

By such Discourses do some plead, not only against the Christian, but All Religion: And those who dare not thus Arraign or Reneg God's Providence, cannot avoid admiring its Conduct, as no less contrary to that loving kindness which the Gospel proclaims, than to the means whereby it was first planted.

BUT if on the other side the Modern Gospel differ as much from the Primitive in its Doctrines, as it doth in its Successes; If it be so changed, that were any Apostle to return into the World, he would be so far from owning, that he would not be able to understand it; the change of Gods Providence in such a change of the Gospel, will be so far from Invalidating, that it will double the force of St. Augustin's *Argument.*

For it proceeded not upon the single Topick of Prosperity, but upon the concourse of an admirable event, with an admirable Prophecy; and its strength is now doubled by the addition of another like concourse of a contrary Event, with a contrary Prediction: So it is thus unhappily improved, The same Spirit of God which foretold that the Gospel should be preached over the whole world, and performed it by the Ministry of a few Fishermen; foretold also to one of the first-born Churches, and thereby to all others, that if she repented not, he would remove her Candlestick out of its place; and this was at that time no less unlikely, than it had been that ever it should be placed there; yet this we see done, and that by a quite contrary Ministry: *By the Sword of a base Slave and his few Followers, and by Doctrines as weak as that Sword when first unsheathed, and lewd as those Rogues that managed it; how then can we doubt, but the one as well as the other were ordered by the same Providence which foretold them?*

If we yet doubt, let us consider particulars. First, the Spirit did not threaten to Extinguish the Light, but only to remove the Candlestick out of its place; *and accordingly, the Light is not quite Extinguished but only Removed; the Gospel hath not Lost ground, but Exchanged; for* America *amply repaireth the Losses sustained in* Europe, Asia *and* Africk.

Again, it is observable, that the Candlestick was thus removed by the light of its own Candle; For whereas the Western *Churches were terribly overrun by a Multitude of Heathen Nations, their Religion as certainly prevailed over the Minds of the Conquerors, as the Invader's Sword did over their Country; the Religion of* Mahomet, *on the contrary, ever kept pace with his and his Followers Swords, and where it subdued the Country, was sure to vanquish the Gospel. If we examine the Reason of this Difference, we shall find, that the Idolatry of the Heathen could not withstand the Power of the Gospel, because it had nothing of its Light; but* Mahomet *professed all the Articles of the Christian Faith, and declared himself not an Apostate, but Reformer; pretending to purify it from the Corruptions wherewith it had been defiled, and perfect it with Additionals, he framed such a Fargon as appeared most serviceable to his Ends, and most suitable to his Lusts.*

So, from the prosperity of the Alcoran, *we have an Argument for the Divinity of the Gospel, as invincible against all power but what was derived from it self; and for the Justice of God's Providence, which as it found corruptions in the Churches of Christ sufficient to provoke his Judgments; so did it truth enough in the* Alcoran, *to prefer that above all other Religions, to the Honour of his Sword.*

WHETHER Mahomet, *or Christian Doctors have more corrupted the Gospel, is not so plain by the light of Scripture, as it is by that of Experience, that the latter gave occasion, Encouragement, and Advantage to the Former. For when by nice and hot disputes (especially concerning the* Second *and* Third *Persons of the Trinity) the minds of the whole people had been long confounded, and by the then late establishment of Image-worship, the scandal was encreased: so that to Vulgar Understandings the Doctrine of the Trinity appeared no less guilty of Polytheism, than that of Image-worship did of Idolatry; when by mutual uncharitableness either party persecuted the other, both with spiritual and temporal Weapons; when thus all mens minds were perplexed with doubts, and scared with threats, so that they knew not What they were to Believe; and thereby so diverted from true Piety, that they cared not how they Lived: Then was there a tempting opportunity offered to the Impostor, and he laid hold on it, to set up himself for a Reformer of such corruptions, as were both too Gross to be justified, and too Visible to be denied.*

This well considered, will admonish us to turn our complaints from Gods Providence to those second causes; which as they provoked our Lord to divorce himself from his Churches, so did they Encourage and Impower the False Prophet to seduce and ruin them.

LET us therefore now proceed to compare the Primitive Gospel with the Modern, not by Retail in Particular Doctrines, (which were a work too great for the Longest and Busiest Life,) but by the Great, in General, whence the Particulars proceeded: For if it appear that our Lord's and his Apostles teaching were both for Matter and Manner, apt to Prevail; but what hath since been added, be apt only to perplex or worse; then ought we to impute the decay of the Christian Religion, not to any defect of Gods Providence, because it doth not change the Nature of things, but to those who have perverted the Gospel.

Let us then well consider (what is most worthy our consideration) that the Gospel which our Lord and his Apostles preached, in the way wherein they

they preached it, was ſuitable to the meaneſt Capacities, and agreeable to the Light of Nature: *Eaſie to be underſtood by the Weakeſt, and worthy to be embraced by the Wiſeſt.*

When the Baptiſt ſent two of his Diſciples ſaying, Art thou he that ſhould come or do we look for another? *Our Lord gave not his anſwer by one Word, Poſitive or Negative, but by ſeveral Signs, wherein the Baptiſt might ſpell out his Mind; and among them he put in* Preaching of the Goſpel to the Poor, *equal to his greateſt Miracles; and we muſt have very odd conceits of his Wiſdom, if he ſuted not his Teaching to the Capacities of his hearers, that the one might be as plain as the other. As he choſe the Poor for his Diſciples, ſo did he afterward for his Apoſtles; and whereas, to prevent the ſcandal that might thence ariſe, he added to their Society a* Choſen Veſſel, *no leſs eminent in Learning, than They were in Simplicity; This great Man of Chriſt profeſſed it both his Duty and his Practice, to imitate That* Man of God, *that ſhrunk his full grown Limbs, to the little ones of the Child, which he was to raiſe to Life: That it was his* Duty *he declareth,* 1 Cor. 1. 17. Chriſt ſent me to Preach the Goſpel, not with Wiſdom of Words: *And that it was his* Practice, *Ch.* 2, 13. We ſpeak not the Words which Man's Wiſdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghoſt teacheth, πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες, *ſuiting ſpiritual words to ſpiritual things, and both to ſpiritual Perſons.*

And upon this account he glorieth, 2 Cor. 4 3,4. If our Goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt, in whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them that believe not, leſt the Light of the Glorious Goſpel of Chriſt, who is the Image of God, ſhould ſhine into them. *The Light of the Goſpel is like that of the Sun, moſt Powerful, as moſt Beutiful, when moſt Naked; and he had not clouded it with any of his Humane Learning, but Preached it with ſuch plainneſs, that if it prevailed not, the faults muſt lie not in the Obſcurity of his Doctrines, but in the Cataracts, which had not only* dimm'd, *but* blinded *the Eyes of Unbelievers.*

But this plainneſs which he Gloried in, ſome others Deſpiſed; they diſdained this Nakedneſs as Poverty, this Simplicity they derided as Ignorance. The Gnoſticks boaſted more Knowledge, and rivaled the Apoſtles, under pretence of diſcovering greater Myſteries, ſo to draw Diſciples from the plain preaching Miniſters of a ſimple Goſpel.

Of theſe Rivals did he no leſs complain, than of all other Perſecutors; and of the Corinthians *he was the more jealous, becauſe they were a People rich, idle, and learned: And this he declareth* 2 Cor. 11. 3. *Their City was, for it's pleaſures and plenty, like* Paradiſe: *It's Inhabitants, for liquoreſhneſs after knowledge, like* Eve: *The Gnoſticks, in their inſinuations, like the* Serpent; *and he feared leſt the ſucceſs ſhould continue the parallel; by corrupting their Minds from the* ſimplicity which is in Chriſt; *whether he meant Simplicity of Mind, requiſite to a Believer, or ſimplicity of Doctrine to be believed; either of theſe were a miſchief worthy to be feared: Simplicity of Mind is its beauty, as was* Eve's *Nakedneſs in her Innocency; and ſimplicity of Doctrine is the Glory of the Goſpel, as is the Nakedneſs of the Sun in its brightneſs: He feared leſt they ſhould by the inſinuations of the Gnoſticks be aſhamed of the Former, and thereby the Later ſhould degenerate from a pleaſant fruitful Garden, to a Boſcage of Fruitleſs Entangling Doctrines. He goeth on, and declareth that the Gnoſtick mode of dreſſing the Goſpel in new Doctrines, did not Adorn but Diſguiſe it, ſo as to make it appear quite another thing:* If he that cometh Preach another Jeſus whom we have not Preached, or ye receive another Spirit which ye have not received, or another Goſpel which ye have not accepted, (*what then?*) you might well bear with Him, *ſaith our Tranſlation, without any warrant from the Apoſtle's Words, and in plain defiance to his Deſign; for his diſcourſe plainly diſſuadeth them from it: and therefore whereas the Greek expreſſeth not the perſon to be born with; Reaſon requireth we ſhould underſtand it, not of the Seducers, but of Himſelf, who impleadeth them: And could we read the Words interrogatorily (*Could you well bear with him?) *this would render them, both more pungent, and more conſonant to what he writeth* Gal. 1. 6. &c. *It is* Another Goſpel, *yet it is* Not another: *Not another, becauſe the firſt truths are reteined; yet it is Another, becauſe perverted by Innovations. If there be ſomething preached* παρ' ὃ. Beſides or Beyond *what himſelf had preached, the additionals make it Another.*

And ſee to what Height he carrieth the Suppoſition! And with what Heat he condemneth it! If we, or an Angel from Heaven Preach any other Goſpel than what you have received (*what then? let him be Rejected, or Deſpiſed? yea*) let him be Accurſed: *Nor thus ſatisfyed, he repeateth it again:* What I have ſaid, that I ſay again. If, &c. *From this zeal of the Apoſtle thus Denouncing, yea thus Inculcating, ſo ſevere a cenſure, we are invited to obſerve.*

1. It is poſſible the Goſpel may be ſo Diſguiſed by innovations, that though it ſtill retain its genuine principles, yet it may appear Another.

2. It is poſſible ſuch innovations may be ſo obvious, that the People may diſcover them.

3. Thoſe

3. Those who depart from such innovaters, are not Schismaticks, but faithful Beleivers.

4 Be the Innovaters never so high in Authority, we must be so far from paying them Implicit Faith, that we must not pay them ordinary Charity, but hold them Accursed.

And lest Bishops might think their office called them to such studies, he cautioneth both Timothy *and* Titus *against them; as no less Foolish than Mischievous. So careful was this great Apostle to arm both Pastors and People against the Gnosticks insinuations. But with what success?*

The Serpents voice prevaileth against all precepts, the people run counter to the Apostles Warnings, and the Priests to his Example. Those heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears; *and these heap up Doctrines to scratch that itch: gently at first, Gratifying their curiosity; but afterward rudely Tormenting their conscience: The peoples hunger in time turned to a Surfeit, and the Priests still cramd them with Doctrines which they could not swallow or digest; so many in numbers, that an ordinary memory cannot retain them; so perplexed in matter, that the best understanding cannot comprehend them; so Impertinent to any good purpose, that a good man need not regard them; and so Unmentioned in Scripture, that none but the greatest subtilty can therein discover the least intimations of them. No sentence, hardly any word in the New Testament escapeth the Rack, that they may be forced to confess what they never thought of. They are put to many Questions, and every Question is stretched by many Articles, and every Article vex'd with many objections, and all this in a New Rude Language unknown to any civil Nation.*

And to what purpose all this? That by the Difficulties and Drineys of such a study, free and generous minds may quit it, Monks engross it, and an Infallible Chair be Established, to determine doubts, of no other use but to make work for the Oracle.

THAT *we may therefore be just to our Lords Providence and Gospel, we must take to our selves both the* Warning, *which we have found the Apostle gave to the* Corinthians; *and the* Encouragement *which he gave to the* Galatians: *The former will* admonish *us to Retrieve the* Simplicity, *from which mens minds have been so much and so long corrupted: The later will* embolden *us to censure those (whoever they be) that have been the Seducers; and that we may not be dazeled by any reverence towards their* Characters, *we must remember that he mounteth them above any supposition that can reach our case.*

Had he only said in General (however comprehensive) words, that we must not be awed by the Greatest human authority; this (however Ample and Absolute) would have appeared a Cold encouragement, in comparison of such an express naming, not only of the greatest that can be Supposed, but greater than can be Imagined.

No King is more independent in his own Dominions from any Foreign Jurisdiction in matters Civil, than every Christian is within his own Mind in matters of Faith: and none can be so secure of any other's Faithfulness to his Soul, as every Man may be of his own: the advice therefore which the best of Kings gave to the Heir of his Crowns, doth no less concern every one that hath a Soul to save.

Above all (*said the incomparable* K. Charles I. *in his Paper to the Prince*) I would have you, as I hope you are already, well grounded and settled in your Religion, the best profession whereof I have ever esteemed that of the Church of *England*, in which you have been educated; yet I would have your own Judgment and Reason now Seal to that Sacred Bond which Education hath written, that it may be judiciously your own Religion, and not other Men's Customs or Tradition which you profess.

To seal to any bond which education may have written, were to profess other Men's Tradition, which in the Blessed King's Judgment is an unworthy baseness; that the Prince might in this particular worthily do it, was by consequence on the excellency of the Church wherein he had been educated; which though Happy for Him, is Accidental as to the Generality of Mankind. This very advice therefore requireth another step, to examine That very Church wherein we have been educated, that we may not put our Souls into a Lottery, wherein are many Bad draughts for one Good; for so we cannot possibly be Judicious in a right choice; and it is great odds, but we shall be Unhappy in an evil Lot.

The Church of England *as it Needs not, so it Does not forbid any of it's Sons the use of their own Eyes; if it did, This alone would be sufficient reason, not only to Distrust, but Condemn it.*

Our great care must be, that we act no less Sincerely than Courageously in this great Affair, which we cannot better manage than by these necessary Enquiries.

1. What was That Gospel, which our Lord and his Apostles preached as necessary believed?

2. What Alterations or Additions have after-ages made in it?

3. What Advantage or Damage hath thereupon ensued?

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

Qu. I. *What was that Gospel which our Lord and his Apostles preached as necessary for Salvation.*

Τί δὴ τὸ παιδεύειν, μανθάνειν τὰς φυσικὰς περὶ λήψεις ἐφαρμόζειν ἑκάστοις κατὰλλήλως τῇ φύσει. *What is Learning or Instruction, but application of Generals to Particulars in a natural way?* saith *Arrian* upon *Epictetus*; laying it as a Fundamental rule whereon we must build, and whereby we must regulate all our opinions in point of Manners. And it will as well hold in all other Arts and Sciences. *Euclid* buildeth all his Geometry upon such principles as he calleth στοιχεῖα, because by that A. B. C. he spelleth out all his demonstrations of Propositions and Solutions of Problems. And by the same rule must we proceed in the judgment we are to make of the Religion we profess: for thus only shall we gain a Test whereby we may understand what is true Gospel.

That we may be secure in our search for such a Test, we must consult no other but the sacred Oracles, which gives us both Character and Account of the Gospel, by the former we understand the Nature; by the latter, the number of its Doctrines.

The *Character* whereby we are to judge of the Nature of the Gospel, is sometime that of a *Covenant*, oftner that of a *Message*.

1. Sometimes it is set forth as a COVENANT, either to secure us of the Performance on God's part; because if he should violate it, he must break not only a Promise given, but a Covenant stablished; or else in opposition to a *Former Covenant*, which it is to succeed; and under this Character we find it prophecied of *Jer.* 31. 33. which Prophecy is applied, *Heb.* 8. 8. *Behold, the days come (saith the Lord) when I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah; Not according to the Covenant which I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my Covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the Covenant,* &c. and more succinctly, *ch.* 10. *v.* 17 *This is the Covenant that I will make with them, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my Laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

So the New Covenant is opposed to the Old: 1. Negatively, *not like the former*, which was no less difficult to be understood, than to be performed; and 2. Positively, the same which their own Hearts craved, and which were so legibly imprinted in the most ignorant mind, that every one without any instructer might read and understand.

It perfected the Old, as in a good *Picture*; the Last lively colours do the First dead ones; which they so deface, as to justifie: But the Law of Nature it perfecteth, as a *Building* does its Foundation, which it so leaneth on, as to keep it firm in its place. For whatever natural Religion could speak in behalf of Vertue, the Gospel so confirmeth, as to build it higher, with nobler Precepts and richer Promises: As therefore as it is a *New Covenant*, it is also a better one, and deserveth the other and better Character. For

2. More frequently 'tis set forth as a *MESSAGE*. This the word literally importeth and under this Title we find it most pompously proclaimed by S. *John*, in his entry on his first Epistle; wherein having studiously recommended it to our confidence by its certainty, and to our appetites by its happiness, he proceedeth to publish its design to be no other than the advancement of Primitive, Natural Religion, to a higher perfection: *These things we write to you that you may have fellowship*, &c. The Patriarchs knew only the Father, but *our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son.* As therefore in the face of Jesus Christ we see more of the Father's goodness, so are we thereby obliged to higher strains of love to him and one another, which is the sum of Natural Religion.

The

The ſame in a gayer dreſs we have in the next verſe; *Theſe things we write unto you that your joy may be full.* *Natural Religion* taught men to worſhip God with Feaſts: and by this Argument principally doth *Plutarch* prove the Joys of the Religious to be greater than thoſe of the Epicuræan; becauſe the one taſteth nothing but the Wine and Viands, but the other rejoyceth in God, then and there eſpecially preſent and propitious. And by this Argument muſt the *Joy* of a Chriſtian be greater than that of a Philoſopher, becauſe the one can have no other aſſurance of God's propitiouſneſs, but what he can borrow from his Reaſon; whereas the other has it by Revelation: For in the *new Covenant* above-recited, is a promiſe of mercy in forgiveneſs of ſins; and in the Goſpel this is more plainly expreſſed, ſo that our St. *John* maketh it a point of faithfulneſs in God to perform it: And whereas death is the wages of ſin, eternal life muſt be the conſequence of its pardon, which alſo in the Goſpel is expreſly promiſed; ſo what the Philoſophers ſtrongly wiſhed and faintly hoped, the Chriſtian is ſecure of and thereby his *joy is full* in that part where theirs was thirſty.

Having thus endeared and publiſhed the gracious *Deſign* of his meſſage, he proceedeth to deliver its joyful *Matter*: *This is the meſſage which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkneſs at all.* A glorious, but a dazling Word! where by yet we underſtand this plain truth, that God is moſt perfect, and it is the deſign of the Goſpel to invite us to be ſuch as he is: which alſo St. *Peter* verifyeth, ſaying *For this purpoſe are given us many rich and precious Promiſes, that by them we ſhould be partakers of the divine nature*: then which words none can more clearly declare that the deſign of the Goſpel, is ſo to deliver us from the diſcipline of the Ceremonial Saw, as to exalt us to the higheſt perfection in the Natural, by making us *Perfect as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*

And if this be the *Deſign*, this the *Matter* of the Goſpel, then have we an Authentick General Teſt, whereby every Doctrine muſt be tried, that claimeth our entertainment as a Goſpel Truth. For every wiſe Agent valueth the Means by their ſerviceableneſs to the end, and Particulars by their ſuitableneſs to the Generals: If to theſe we find any Doctrines ſerviceable, we muſt embrace them; if impertinent, we muſt ſlight them; if pernicious we muſt condemn them.

With this Teſt then in our hands, as we ſafely may, ſo we boldly ſhall purſue our Enquiries.

The Firſt is, *What was the Goſpel which our Saviour and his Apoſtles preached?*

This Enquiry plainly concerneth matter of Fact, and therefore cannot employ any Logick, Metaphyſicks, or any other Scholaſtik Arts, cannot need ſubtilty of judgment, or cunning in diſpute, or any other qualification of mind, but care and honeſty; nor again doth it put us to tumble great or many Books, yea or ſo much as one Syſtem, ſaith no more than our Lord did to him that enquired, *what he ſhould do to be ſaved?* Our Lord ſent him to his Bible, *what is written in the Law? how readeth thou:* We have a faithful record of whatever can pretend to be Goſpel, and ſufficient to anſwer the like queſtion *what ſhall I believe to be ſaved?*

In its largeſt Edition the Goſpel, truly ſo called, exceedeth not Two Doctrines: St. *Mark* ſaith, *Our Saviour came into Galilee, preaching the Goſpel of the Kingdom of God, ſaying, the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand, REPENT and BELIEVE the Goſpel*: By which if it be not ſufficiently plain, that the Goſpel is compriſed in Repentance and Faith, Saint *Paul* putteth it beyond diſpute: For in his farewel diſcourſe with the Elders of the Church of *Epheſus* he thus juſtifieth himſelf, *I have not kept back any thing from you that was profitable for you, but preached unto you REPENTANCE toward God, and FAITH toward our Lord Jeſus*

Jesus Christ. No words can more expresly declare that in these two are contained, not only all things *Necessary*, but all things *Profitable*: And those who so importunately call for another catalogue of fundamentals must impeach the Apostle either of gross Ignorance or a grosser Lye.

Yea, the Holy Ghost seemeth so to shun multiplication of necessaries, that in other places it thinketh Two too many, and therefore reduceth them to One; and to either of the two. For in our Lord's first Sermon, as recited by St. *Matthew*, we find no mention of Repentance, but only of Faith: And so his last Sermon agreeth with his first, for therein he professeth this to be the design of his Death and Resurrection, *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.*

Yet is Faith also in its turn honoured with the same dignity, as the sole and adequate substance of the Gospel: Our Lord himself told *Nicodemus*, that *God sent him into the world, that whatsoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* And St. *John* closeth his Gospel with this saying, *These things are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name.*

So far is our Lord from thinking his Gospel honoured by multiplication of Articles, that rather than keep up that least of numbers, he is content to dismiss either of the two.

That in this he may not appear to contradict himself, we must consider, that they are both the same under different aspects, and in their comprehensive latitude either containeth the other: For to Believe includeth Repentance, as a condition of obtaining that Remission, which without Faith it could not pretend to, nor labour for: And Repentance includeth Faith, because it is performed in confidence of the promise, that God for Christ's sake will pardon the penitent.

Because therefore they have their several aspects and definitions, upon the distinct views whereof, they may be both of them more clearly apprehended, therefore will we handle them as the two Tables of the new Covenant, so joined as to be several. When display'd they appear Two, Faith, and Repentance; when closed, they appear but One; and that side which is next the eye denominateth the whole, sometime Faith, sometime Repentance. Yes! the whole new Covenant is written by our Lord's own finger in these two Tables; and the positive Rites which he appointed, thereby to engage us to profess our selves his Disciples, are not Parts of his Covenant, but Badges of his Followers, and Acknowledgments of their homage to his Person. Those Rituals we shall not neglect, but first must do justice to the Covenant in its Substance; and we shall endeavour to do it with all possible simplicity, with such plainness as may Instruct every Honest Reader, and Convince every Obstinate: Provided they have not so utterly abandoned all their faculties, as to become contradictions to themselves, which they must be, if they want both Courage and Fear; Courage to denounce the Anathema which the Apostle hath commissionated them to cast against the greatest human authority, if it *bring another Gospel*; and Fear to offend against our Lord's command, not to *call any one Master upon Earth.*

CHAP. II.

Of FAITH, *In what ſence it Juſtifieth?*

WE begin with Faith upon two contrary accounts: 1. Becauſe it is ſo unhappy, as to be the occaſion of the Gnoſticiſm which ſo much troubled S. *Paul*, by *corrupting* diſciples *minds from the ſimplicity which is in Chriſt*; and 2. Becauſe it is ſo happy, as to be honoured by our Lord and his Apoſtles, as the ſole condition for our Salvation. For as St. *Paul* declareth, that we are *juſtified by Faith without works*; ſo our Lord (who doubtleſs knew his own errand) telleth *Nicodemus*, *God ſo loved the world that he ſent his only begotten Son into it, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.*

What can be fuller or clearer? The Benefit is proclaimed under a double character, to double its certainty, Negative, *ſhall not periſh*; and Poſitive, *ſhall have everlaſting life*: The Promiſe is Univerſal, to *whoſoever believeth*, and Free from all other condition but believing. If this ſeem incredible, the wonder is cured by another no leſs incredible, *God ſent his only begotten Son into the world* on purpoſe; yet both the one and the other are made credible by the wonderful reaſon aſſigned, *God ſo loved the world*. And now, what need of the impertinent trouble of Repentance? Why ſhould we run the ſmarting gandelope of Mortification, croſſing our Appetites, and afflicting our Souls?

Thus do ſome daſh the two Tables of the new Covenant againſt each other, and make the Goſpel an enemy to its own great deſign, which we have found to be the advancement of Natural Religion.

The firſt ſervice therefore that we can reaſonably do to Faith, muſt be to reſcue it from ſo great a miſchief, by reconciling our Lord's abſolute Promiſe of *eternal life to whoſoever believeth*, with his no leſs abſolute Threat, that *except we repent we ſhall all periſh*. And this will eaſily be done by theſe two Propoſitions.

1. *All Promiſes, however abſolute in words muſt be underſtood with implication of all things neceſſary to be ſuppoſed.*

2. *In our Lord's abſolute Promiſe of eternal life to all Believers, repentance is neceſſary to be ſuppoſed.*

1. *All Promiſes include a tacit ſuppoſal of all things neceſſary to be ſuppoſed.* It is impoſſible, at leaſt very Troubleſome, and equally Needleſs, that whoever maketh a promiſe, ſhould explicitly reckon up all ſuch conditions, as by their own light are viſible, and therefore Need not; and by their Multitude Innumerable, and therefore cannot be particularly expreſſed: Reaſon therefore, and Neceſſity, and the joynt Practice of all Mankind, have concurred in the rule, that whatever is neceſſary in its own nature to be ſuppoſed, is to be taken as neceſſarily Implied; and accordingly in every Promiſe are tacitly implied ſuch Plain, though unmentioned Reſervations.

2. *Repentance and Holineſs of life are neceſſary to be ſuppoſed.* This appeareth both from the nature of the thing, and the expreſs declarations of the Author of the Promiſe.

From *the Nature of the thing*. The Law of Nature is written in the heart by the hand of God, as a tranſcript of his own nature, and muſt be, like its Original, immortal: The Goſpel came not to deface it, but to make it more legible; to new write it upon our Underſtandings, with clearer gloſſes; upon our Reaſon, with brighter arguments; upon our Affections, with nobler motives; upon our Hopes,

Hopes, with higher encouragements; and upon our Beliefs, with plainer Promiſes. And ſhould our Lord, upon any account whatſoever, promiſe impunity to Sin; this would turn him from a *Saviour* to a *Tempter*: *You ſhall not die*, was the voice of the Serpent; and while the Sons of *Eve* have the ſame licoriſhneſs after forbidden pleaſures, the ſame promiſe (if believed) muſt have the ſame ſucceſs. To promiſe impunity in a pleaſant evil, is to invite to its enjoyment. Far be this from our Lord, who was ſo careful to preſerve us from ſo great a danger, that he did not leave us to the general nature of all Promiſes, but clearly and frequently warned us againſt ſuch a miſtake. He openly declared, that ſome would not only plead their Faith, but its Fruits; *Preaching in his Name, caſting out Devils*, and *doing many wonderful Works*, are plain evidences of true Faith; yet even to ſuch he will ſay, *depart from me, I know you not*, when he knows them too well to own them, becauſe *workers of iniquity*.

And that Repentance may not complain as leſs honoured, he preferreth it to the ſame dignity; for in his laſt Sermon to his Apoſtles, he ſaith no leſs for it than he had done for Faith, *Thus is is written, and thus it behoveth Chriſt to ſuffer and to riſe again*, and that *Repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his Name*; but to what purpoſe ſhould repentance be preached in his Name, who had promiſed everlaſting Life without it?

That we may be the more ſecure of a rule ſo important, let us ſee how it's confirmed by an example ſo oppoſite, that it looketh more like an illuſtration framed on purpoſe, than a true Hiſtory, *Act.* 27. 18.

We were in the ſame danger of Eternal Death, as St. *Paul* and his Company were of Temporal, and our deliverance is no leſs like, than was the danger: *Paul* promiſeth *there ſhall not be loſs of any Man's Life*; yet when the Mariners would have ſtoln away, he ſaid to the Centurion, *except theſe abide in the Ship we cannot be ſaved.*

What now can the *Antinomian* plead, which this example doth not anſwer? What difficulty is there in the doctrine of Juſtification by Faith, which it doth not clear? Did Chriſt abſolutely and univerſally promiſe, that *whoſoever believeth in him ſhall not periſh*? So did his Apoſtle abſolutely and univerſally promiſe, that *no Man's Life ſhould be loſt*: Is Juſtification freely promiſed for *Chriſt's ſake*? So was deliverance freely promiſed for *Paul's ſake*. Did God ſend his *Son* to publiſh this promiſe? So did he ſend his Angel to St. *Paul*: Are our beſt works inſufficient to juſtifie us? So was the beſt skill of the Mariners to deliver the Voyagers: Yet unleſs the Mariners abide in the Ship, none of the Company can eſcape; and unleſs Holineſs abide in our lives, we muſt periſh. If therefore any under pretence of caſting Anchor upon Chriſt's promiſe, ſteal away from repentance, we muſt have recourſe to our *rule*, as St. *Paul* had to the *Centurion*; and the neceſſity of Holineſs will perform the ſame office as the Souldiers did, cut aſunder their pretences, and let their hopes fall off.

In this rule there is nothing doubtful but this, whether it be more Obvious, or Neglected, or Important?

So *Important*, that it will clear all the difficulties which ſwell ſo many Volumes with queſtions concerning *Juſtification*, and the *Covenant of Grace*. Papiſts will not be able to quarrel with us, when we ſay with S. *Paul*, *By Faith we are juſtified*; nor will the *Antinomians* be able to accuſe us as Enemies of *Free Grace*, when we ſay with St. *James*, *we are juſtified by works*.

It is ſo *Obvious* and ſimple, that it will eaſily avoid the impertinent niceties of Diſputers, whether it be an Aſſent, or Reliance, or Recumbency? whether it juſtifie as an Inſtrument, or a Condition? By the Act, or the Habit? Before Sanctification,

or after it? *&c.* We no sooner reconcile St. *Paul* with himself, his Absolute Promise of deliverance with his Protestation, that without the Mariners stay they must perish; but we thence learn how to reconcile him with St. *James*; free Grace, with Conditions required; the Insufficiency of good Works, with their Necessity; Justification by Works, upon account of Natural Religion, with Justification by Faith, upon account of the Gospel.

Yet it is so *Neglected*, that among those many Treatises that have been published, concerning the *New Covenant* and *Justification*, I know not of one that hath honoured it with so much as a mention.

Yea, it is worthy our consideration upon another account; it may silence, not only the *Antinomian*, in his opposition to good Works, but the *Gnostick* too, in his humour of disputing. For pray consider; would it not have been wonderous wisely done, if in time of such danger, and upon such warning, the Souldiers, instead of hasting to secure the Mariners, and their own lives, should have trifled away their precious time in disputing to which of the two they must owe their lives? to the Apostle, because God had given them to him; or to the Mariners, because he had declared they could not escape without them? for God's sake, let us hasten to put our Souls out of danger; when that is done, and we are safe at land, if we can there find no better employment, nor greater pleasure, than to play at cross purposes, we may think how to oppose, and then to reconcile St. *Paul* and *St. James*.

The case (you may say) is very unlike: *St. Paul* was a chosen vessel, and a stout Champion for the Gospel; He was *not behind the very chiefest of the Apostles, but laboured* and suffered *more than they all*. This very voyage was but part of a danger, which carried him to a greater for the Gospel's sake: And it was but just that his Lord, for whose sake he was engaged in the storm should deliver him from it; and the extent of the favour to all his companions, though in Justice it were not due, might very congruously be granted in Kindness to so great a Saint, and under such circumstances. *But what are the great merits of faith which may any way entitle it to so great a reward as everlasting life? Whatever can pretend to worth, must make its claim good, by shewing how it partaketh the nature of God, who is the first good: but to be* Credulous, *is so far from the power of Divine life, that it is a plain confession of Weakness; it is nothing else but Leaning upon another, for want of knowledge of its own*: The simple believeth every word, but a wise man looketh well to his going, *said the wisest of all mere men. And experience telleth us, that Children and Dotards, Women and Fools, the Sick and the Ignorant, are most easie; and by how much any man is wiser, by so much he is warier, that he be not imposed upon. Had it any worth, we should have heard of it in* Moses *or the Prophets, and the Philosophers would have allowed it a place among the Virtues: Whereas on the contrary, Philosophers reckon Credulity among the Vices, and the Old Testament mentioneth it but once or twice, and that not by way of Precept, but occasionly. And what reward can it possibly deserve? If I believe, either I do it upon good reason, or not; If I see good reason for my belief, I cannot deserve Reward, because no man can chuse, but must Necessarily believe, as far as Reason requires: If I believe without reason, then I am a Fool, and so far from deserving a Reward, that I deserve Blame. And if it seem hard to justifie our Lord's Wisdom, in promising so great a Reward to a performance that deserveth none at all; it will appear no less so, to justifie his Goodness in imposing such a task no less Difficult than Worthless: For whereas no small part of the good tidings of the Gospel, is our Manumission from the bondage of* Moses's *Law; the yoke of Christ will seem the harder of the*

two.

two. It is easier for a rich Man to sacrifice whole Hecatombs, when he hath wealth enough to purchase them, than to pull out his Eyes, yet can any Man easier pull out the Eye of his Body than his Reason, which is not only the Eye, but the Heart; for it is his very Definition, without which he cannot be a Man: It is God's Image, *and the Apostle exhorteth us to* put on the new Man, which is renewed in knowledge after the Image of him that created him. *Now that God should Print his Image in our Hearts, require us to Renew it; yet promise Eternal Life for reward if we Deface it, is a saying harder to be Believed, than all the Ceremonies of* Moses's *Law were to be Practised.*

This and more is objected against Faith in general; and still the more we descend to particulars, whether in the Doctrines, that are imposed as Articles of Faith; or in the dispute between That and Good works; the more will the Objections rise in force and number; for every one employeth his care against the Adversary of his Opinion, with neglect of the first principles of the Gospel; and those who plead for justification by Faith, have not the gratitude to justifie Faith it self, or its Great Author; but leave him as an Arbitrary, Unreasonable Lawgiver, imposing Useless, Worthless commands, with the weightiest obligations.

We shall therefore endeavour, by his Grace, to perform so Necessary and Neglected a work; and by the Plainest, Simplest, General Principles of Religion and Reason, so to assert the Honour of our Lord and his Gospel, as to give a fair account both of his Wisdom and Goodness; proving his Gospel to be no less Grateful to our Reason, than Gracious to our Salvation; which also will be a good healer of our breaches that are made in our Minds by Doubts, or in the Church of Christ by Disputes, concerning controverted Doctrines.

For whereas it is acknowledged as a foundation in all Sciences, that we must seek truth by application of Generals to Particulars; and it is the General scope of the Gospel to advance *Natural Religion*; this is the sting of the Objection, That Faith hath no place among Virtues, but Credulity hath one among Vices: That our defence therefore may both obviate the objection, and build upon a good foundation, it shall stand upon these two Pillars.

1. *Faith is a duty in Natural Religion, as a Cardinal Virtue.*

2. *Credulity is not Faith; but as opposite to it, as Vice is to Virtue.*

Both these Propositions are of Divine Authority, recommended by the Apostle, *Rom.* 3. 4. in these Words, *Let God be true, but every Man a Lyer*; so that we can say nothing but by way of explication, displaying what is wrapt up in those few Divine Syllables: And when we have thence discovered what figure Faith made in Natural Religion, we shall have gone at least half way in discovering what Power is given it in the Gospel.

CHAP. III.

What figure FAITH made in Natural Religion.

FAITH is a duty in Natural Religion, a Cardinal virtue, Justice toward God, to whom it payeth what is due: To his Veracity, let God be true; to his Faithfulness, let God be just; to his Power, let God be able to perform his Promises, *&c.* That this was taught by Natural Religion before *Moses* brought the Positive into the World, and that the Gospel buildeth upon That foundation; if any one doubt, let him but read the *4th.* Chapter of St. *Paul's* Epistle to the *Romans*, he will there find

Abraham's

Abraham's Faith recommended to us for a Pattern, with an Explanation of the Bleſſing he obtained by it, and who are to be Heirs to it: Not the Children of his *loins*, but of his *faith*, muſt be heirs; thoſe who *walk in his Steps*, ſhall reſt in his Boſom; and after a deſcription of his heroical Faith, the Panegyrick is cloſed with a declaration, *Theſe things are written, not for* Abraham's *ſake alone, but for ours alſo.*

That we may walk in his ſteps, it will be requiſite we trace them; which if we do, we ſhall find large ſteps on either ſide; Great Confidence in God's Faithfulneſs on one ſide, and great Obedience to his Commands on the other; by the one he ſacrificed his Reaſon, by the other his *Iſaac.*

1. *His Confidence* in God's faithfulneſs was ſo firm, that he *ſtaggered not*, but ſtood *ſtrong* in his Belief, and proceeded in his Obedience, notwithſtanding all oppoſite diſcouragements from the Laws of Nature, or Dictates of Reaſon. It was againſt the courſe of Nature, that he ſhould have a Child, when both his own and his *Sarah*'s Bodies were no better than dead, as to power of Generation; and more againſt the dictates of Reaſon, that *Iſaac* ſhould be a Father after he were ſacrificed; yet did not either the One or the Other ſeem ſo impoſſible, as that God ſhould lye.

He knew him infinite in Wiſdom, Power, and Truth; that he could ſome way or other, undiſcovered to Humane Eyes, perform his promiſes; and ſince no other appeared, the Author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* ſuppoſeth he believed, that *God was able to raiſe him from the Dead.* And in theſe ſteps of our Father *Abraham*, the Apoſtle exhorteth us to walk after him; but we muſt do it —*non paſſibus æquis.* For raiſing of the dead was a thing unheard of to *Abraham*; whereas the ſame Son of God, in whom we are to believe, gave us an experiment of it in his own reſurrection; ſo that to *Abraham*'s Faith and ours may be applied our Lord's words to *Thomas*, we believe after we had ſeen; but bleſſed *Abraham* had neither ſeen, nor heard, yet believed: Yet if we have the Faith but of *Thomas*, it ſhall be imputed to us for righteouſneſs; and the Apoſtle ſo ſpeaketh, as if our Lord ſhewed us his Reſurrection upon That very account; for he ſaith, *Chriſt was delivered for our offences, and raiſed again for our juſtification*; in which words though the ſame particle διὰ be alike uſed in both, yet muſt it be as little the Apoſtle's Meaning as our Intereſt, that it ſhould import the ſame in both; for he ſo *dyed for our offences*, as to dye in our ſtead; but we cannot deſire, nor could the Apoſtle mean, that he roſe in our ſtead: We rejoice that our offences are taken away by his Death, but ſhould be ſorry to have our Juſtification taken away by his Reſurrection: It is therefore plain that the Particle [*For*] is ſo far from the ſame ſignification in both, that the former is contrary to the latter: We are juſtified by his Blood, becauſe thereby our ſins are blotted out; but we are juſtified by his Reſurrection, becauſe thereon our Faith is built; for hereby we are convinced of the truth which we are to believe, and by that belief to be juſtified, as was *Abraham*. So plain it is that the Faith which the Goſpel requireth had its foundation in Natural Religion; and while *Abraham* is propoſed as the *Father of the Faithful*, Natural Faith is alſo propoſed as the Mother of the Evangelical. That in the Law it ſhould never be Commanded, nor ſo much as recommended more than once, and that with no higher Eulogy than this, Abraham *believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteouſneſs*, nor by any of the Prophets, but once, and that with this ſhort come-off, *the juſt ſhall live by his Faith*; this is no wonder at all: For whoever hath ſo much Religion as to believe there is a God, muſt believe him to be Abſolutely perfect; which he could not be, if he want either Veracity or Power; and

if

if he be infinite in Both, it muſt be impoſſible for him to lye, or fail of performing his Promiſes.

This therefore needeth neither Revelation for want of Evidence, nor Precept for want of a plain Obligation: and the Old Teſtament muſt have done impertinently, if without any need it ſhould have offered the one or the other.

Yet though the Old Teſtament gives us no command, it doth give us Warnings by the puniſhment of Unbelievers. *Sarah*, for her believing husbands ſake, eſcaped with a gentle reprimand, though her Unbelief of the truth of God's meſſenger were aggravated with a double Untruth of her own: for though ſhe laughed at the promiſe of a Son in her old age, and then denied that ſhe did ſo laugh; yet did the Angel reprove her with no other ſharpneſs, but that of reaſon, againſt her double fault, *Is any thing impoſſible with God?* was an argument drawn from Natural Religion, ſo forceable as to triumph over all natural cauſes, and ſtop the mouth of all other infidelity, but that of the Atheiſt.

But *Lot*'s wife, after ſo manifeſt experience of the Power of her gueſts, in delivering themſelves from the force of the whole City, by ſmiting ſmall and great with blindneſs, believed not their threats to deſtroy the ſame City with fire; but turning *back from behind* her believing, flying husband (who's haſte to ſave himſelf, and obedience to the prohibition of the Angels (*ſaying look not behind thee*) hindered him from perceiving it) returning into the curſed City, there periſhed among her wicked neighbours, and became a *pillar of ſalt*, that is, in the Hebrew idiom, *an everlaſting Monument*, of the puniſhment due to Unbelievers.

When to a ſtarving City the Prophet of God promiſed a greater plenty the next day, than ever had been known in any; the incredulous Lord had This puniſhment, that he *ſaw it with his eyes* for the conviction of his Unbelief, but could not taſte it for the ſatisfaction of his Hunger: The unbelieving Iſraelites, who lived upon daily experience of God's power, when they diſtruſted his promiſe of victory over the tall and mighty *Canaanites*, periſhed in the Wilderneſs; and thoſe that asked, *can God prepare a table in the wilderneſs?* fell under his wrath with the meat in their mouths.

The ſame light which ſheweth us the Being of God, ſheweth alſo his Perfections; and to give an expreſs Law, or uſe any other means to perſwade a Belief in him, had been the ſame wiſdom, as to perſwade me to believe the Sun ſhineth; which were an affront both to the Sun & me.

And thus I hope I have proved that Faith in God is a duty of Natural Religion, a moral Virtue, and to be valued for its intrinſick worth, as a *participation of the Divine Nature* in one of God's Attributes, his Juſtice; and we may well proceed to conſider, that beſides this intrinſick worth, whereby it deſerveth to be valued as ſelf-good; it hath another worth, as a Serviceable means to all other Graces and Duties.

2. *FAITH* is a great promoter of Obedience; and where as the Old Teſtament ſeemeth ſilent herein, we have a whole and large Chapter in the New, aſcribing all the heroical actions and ſuffering of the Patriarchs to This Grace; and ſo by a kind and poſtliminium aſſerting the right which Natural Religion had, and God might (if he had pleaſed) have by Law required.

And that it may be proved as clearly as aſſerted; an argument is offered in the entrance upon the diſcourſe; *by Faith* Enoch *was tranſlated, having received this teſtimony, that he pleaſed God; but without Faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God, for he that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*; which argument will receive a little light from the phraſe wherein the teſtimony

ſtimony was given, and where to the Argument refers. It is ſaid *Gen.* 5: 22, *Enoch walked with God*, and now the Sorites runs thus, He that doth not walk with God cannot pleaſe God, he that doth not come to God cannot walk with God, he that doth not believe that God is, and is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him, cannot come to him, nor will he ſeek after him.

After this Argument we have a muſter of many atchievements performed by Faith in the Patriarchs and others, among whom ſtandeth Father *Abraham* like *Saul* among the people, taller by the head; not only than all there preſent, but than all that ever were or ſhall be: For the higheſt boaſt of St. *John* is, *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith*. but *Abraham* might boaſt a Victory, not only over the *world* but over its *Creator*. For it is ſaid *God tryed Abraham*: he did indeed, for he tryed the maſtery with him: he *tryed* which could exceed, himſelf in hard Commands, or *Abraham* in abſolute Obedience; and upon tryal it appears, that the victory fell to *Abraham*'s Faith, which did not only *Fulfill* his duty, but *Exceed it*; perhaps in the Matter, certainly in the manner. The *Matter* was ſuch, as he might have Diſputed, and perhaps Diſobeyed, without ſin: He might poſſibly have pleaded God's *Promiſe* in bar to his *Command*. God had given him this Son, 'tis true, but with a promiſe annexed, that this Son, this very Son *Iſaac*, ſhould be Father of a numerous and bleſſed Poſterity: And ſince this depended upon his life; whatever Right God might have to his Obedience, himſelf had a right in God's Promiſe which he could not be obliged to renounce, And granting that God's Prerogative might over-rule ſuch a Plea; This however cannot be denied, that Obedience, however unwilling, was the utmoſt which the Command could exact, and therefore

2. The *Manner* of his Obedience certainly exceeded his Obligation, in the Chearfulneſs and Diligence of the performance. For though *Iſaac* were endeared to him by by long deſpair, and then by glorious promiſes; though he muſt periſh not by an Ordinary or Honourable death, but that of a Beaſt; though the tender Father muſt not Hear of this by Meſſengers, but muſt Torment his Eyes, yea imbrue his Hands too in the cruel Butchery; though in ſo doing, he muſt offer no leſs violence to his Reaſon, than to his *Iſaac*; though all this might well have Staggered, yea quite Overthrown both Faith and Obedience; yet he is ſo far from Staggering, that he doth not only Stand firm to his Duty, but Out-goeth it: doth not plead the ſcandal of ſo Cruel, ſo Inhumane, and Unnatural an action, as muſt make his Perſon and his Religion ſtink among his Neighbours; doth not intercede for his only Son, as for *Sodom*, ſaying, *Shall not the God of all the world do right?* Doth not petition for him as *Moſes* did for the people, that God would reverſe his Sentence, or as *Jephta*'s Daughter did for a little time of reprieve; but without the leaſt tergiverſation, is equally Diligent and Cautious in the execution; riſeth early in the morning, hideth his purpoſe from his Wife, leſt ſhe ſhould hinder it, taketh with him but two Servants, and them he leaveth at ſuch diſtance as to prevent the reſcue which their officiouſneſs might make of their young Maſter from the ſeeming madneſs of their old, drilleth *Iſaac* himſelf along with pretence that God would provide a Lamb: what could the moſt tender Father do more to Save the life of an only Son? *Hæc eſt fides*, ſaid *Nero*, when his Servant to ſatisfie his humour killed himſelf; this is ſuch a Faith as might well be *imputed to Abraham for righteouſneſs*, and propoſed to us for a pattern; and ſtop the mouth of all objections which ſhall not think Faith worthy of God's acceptance, or of a place among Moral Virtues which are the Graces in Natural Religion.

And

And as it hath the Worth, so it hath the Unhappiness of a Virtue, beset on either side with a Vice, Defect on one side, and Excess on the other: on the One side Infidelity is the Defect, and on the Other side Credulity is the Excess of Faith; and as is usual with all Virtues, we find it reproached under the name of the Excess, whereof it is no wise guilty, as we come to consider in our second Proposition.

CHAP. IV.

Credulity is not FAITH, but an opposite Vice.

II. CREDULITY is not Faith, but as opposite to it as Vice is to Virtue: as Fool-hardiness is to Valour, Prodigality to Bounty, and all Excess to Prudence, which is the Soul of all Virtue whatever.

We have reduced Faith to Justice; because its proper work is to pay God the confidence due to his Veracity. And herein we seem to be out of all danger of Excess, seeing God's faithfulness is infinite: and so indeed we are, while we make our payment to the Right Object. For to God is due not only Actual belief of every word which we know him to have spoken, but an Habitual readiness to believe any other, when ever it shall appear to come from him, and all without reserve for any contradicting sence or reason.

Our only danger of excess therefore lieth in our mistake, not of the Degree but the Object; and this we incur if we pay That confidence to any creature which is due to God only.

Our excellent *Chillingworth* spake no less Modestly than Rationally, when he said, that he had often demanded of the Romanists, why *implicit Faith in our Lord*, might not as well avail for Justification, as *implicit Faith in the Church*; but could never receive an answer to so plain and important a question: It is indeed too much to be Answered, but too little to be Demanded; for it ought to be raised to a demand, how any Church dare Challenge, or any Person dare Pay, that faith to Any, yea to all the creatures in heaven and earth, which is due to God only? This is Injustice to God, for two plain Reasons.

1. It is a kind of spiritual Polytheism; such a falling down and worshipping the creature, as must provoke Him who declareth himself a *jealous God*, that will not give his honour to another: *Let God be true, and every man a liar*, is a double word of God's own mouth; and he that doth not believe the Latter as well as the Former, maketh God a Liar, and Man a God.

2. Those who so require implicit faith in any other authority, as to contradict Reason; give God the lie, by making him contradict himself. For Reason is no less the word of God, than is the Scripture; Yea Therefore, and therefore only, are we to believe whatever we find in Scripture, because we are by plain Reason convinced that it is the word of God, whom we must believe in defiance to all opposition whatsoever. *The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching the innermost parts of the belly*, saith *Solomon*. The spirit is that part of our frame, wherein *we are created in knowledge after the Image of God*: and in the *fleshly tables of our hearts* are his words written with the same finger, as were his Laws in the *Tables of Stone*; and therefore to say that this *Candle* contradicteth the *Sun of righteousness*, is no less injurious to God, than to his Image and Workmanship.

There is indeed in the One as in the O-

ther light, great difference of degrees of brightneſs: Some truths appear ſo plain, that the Weakeſt, yea the Soreſt eye cannot avoid ſeeing and acknowledging them; but ſome are ſo ſmall or ſo remote, that they may deceive or eſcape the Beſt. Yet muſt not This prejudice our belief of ſuch great truths, as appear plain both by ſunſhine and candlelight, whereof the later never contradicteth the former.

Abraham's faith is our conſtantly ſerviceable pattern: It ſeemed utterly repugnant to plain reaſon, that *Iſaac* ſhould be a father of nations if he were ſacrificed; but it ſeemed much more ſo, that God ſhould be Unfaithful; and therefore, when *Abraham* believed, he did no leſs juſtice to his own Reaſon, than to God's Faithfulneſs.

To make this (if poſſible) yet plainer, we muſt diſtinguiſh between matter of Faith, and matter of Fact: Matter of Faith, is this only Propoſition, that it is impoſſible God ſhould lie; and to This, *Abraham* ſtood firm, without ſtaggaring at the ſeeming oppoſition between the Promiſe and the Command: But that God firſt made ſuch a Promiſe, and then impoſed ſuch a Command, this was matter of Fact; wherein though the Scripture be ſilent, Reaſon is clamarous: ſhewing us, that *Abraham* was by Sufficient (though to us Unrevealed) evidences, no leſs Secure This way, than Confident the Other way. Elſe might he more juſtly be Blamed for diſhonouring God with a thought, that he could be author of ſuch a cruel command; than juſtified for his confidence in a faithfulneſs, which had been unconcerned.

So there muſt be two Meaſures for our belief: of the one kind is the faithfulneſs of the Perſon, in whom we believe: if God be the perſon, our Belief muſt be Infinite, becauſe his Veracity is ſo; if Man be the perſon, our Belief muſt be Wary, becauſe Man is a Liar, or at leaſt may be ſuſpected to be ſo. Of the other kind, is the evidence which we have, that what is offered us for the word of God, is really ſuch: and to this we muſt pay neither More nor Leſs belief, than Reaſon will prove due; provided we be ſtill ready to pay more, as our evidence ſhall increaſe, becauſe our Reaſon for belief will increaſe equally with ſuch evidence. This is all that Juſtice can demand; and whoever payeth more, doth it in his Own wrong, and perhaps in God's too.

A ſad example hereof we have in the Prophet, that by the word of the Lord came from *Juda* to *Bethel*, and to the Kings face propheſied the deſtruction of his Altar: he obeyed a Troubleſom and Hazardous Command, refuſed a Royal Invitation, returned homeward another way than that by which he came, and in every thing conformed to his Commiſſion. But when an old Prophet ſaid to him, *I am a Prophet as well as thou art, and an Angel ſpake unto me by the word of the Lord, ſaying, Bring him back with thee into thine houſe, that he may eat bread, and drink water*; the eaſie good man, believing the malicious lying one, was puniſhed, not ſo properly for his Diſobedience, as his Credulity. This being the rule (ſay the Rabbins and Reaſon) that when a Prophet hath received a word immediately from God, he muſt not believe any other than equally immediate word of God in contradiction to it.

The example jointeth cloſe with the caſe before us. Whatever we hear from clear Reaſon, we hear from a word of God: whoever would perſwade us to disbelieve it, muſt produce ſuch Credentials, as may convince us to the contrary; If he do this, Reaſon immediately tacketh about in conformity to the Evidence, as to another word of the ſame God: but if no other Credentials be offered than his own, or ſome other Humane (that is, Fallible, or Fallacious) authority; we are no more to comply with it, than the true Prophet ought to have done with the lying one.

The

The end perhaps of such Credulous persons may be less dismal, they may not become the *Lions* prey; but they have already made themselves the *Asses* companions, by submitting their Understandings to the Bridle and Saddle, imposed on them by a dull mistake of Credulity toward man for Faith toward God; more obvious than that of the Fool-hardy Prodigal, or any other overdoer, that by Excess vitiateth a Virtue.

By these Plain and Vulgar Principles of Morality, we understand in Believing as we do in all other actions, what is Virtuous or Vicious, and so do we also, why so Little hath been spoken of it by *Moses* and the Prophets, and so much by Christ and his Apostles. The same Natural Religion which claimed it as due to God, forbad to pay it to any Creature; upon the Former account there was No need of an express precept, and upon the Latter there was the Greatest need; not only of an express Command, but such repeated Importunities, as might outvoice both Reason, when it should decry such a demand, and Interest, when it should rebel against convinced Reason; both whereof concurred against the belief which our Lord required.

CHAP. V.

Why FAITH *maketh a greater figure under the Gospel, than it did under the Law?*

FOR our clearer view of the Reason why Faith should make so much a greater figure in the Gospel, than it did under the Law, let us parallel *Faith* toward Christ, with *Loyalty* towards the King. *Loyalty* is a standing duty, which at all times must be paid to the King. In peaceable times, as there is no occasion for any proclamation to require it, so there is none to Promise it any Reward, but what the Laws of Government promise at all times to good Subjects, protection in their just rights: But if a Prince be dethroned and banished, disabled to defend his own Power and his Subjects lives; if Loyalty now shall expose a good Subject to as great punishments, as in good times are the reward of rebellion; In this case, Policy for his own interests, concurreth with Justice to a good subjects merits, to perswade the Prince, by publick proclamation and private messages, and all other possible means, to encourage his Subjects with liberal promises, that they may find it their Interest as well as their Duty, to imploy their endeavours in their injured Prince's behalf.

Just thus it is in the present case: Faith is a standing duty to Christ, and must be paid at all times to the end of the World. But at that time when our Lord first claimed it, and St. *Paul* spoke such great things of it, there were extraordinary reasons for the importunities and promises, wherewith it was then honoured, and the world solicited; some whereof in these days, when the Christian Religion hath been long established, have lost their influence.

Those extraordinary reasons may be reduced to three. 1. The *Difficulties* of believing. 2. The *Danger* of professing it. 3. The *Necessity* of both.

1. The *Difficulties* at first were many and great; the Command was short, but Hard: *You believe in God, believe also in me. You believe in God*, you cannot avoid so doing, and the very notion of a God exacts it from you: You cannot believe there is a God without believing him to be infinite,

as in all other perfections, so in Faithfulness; and this will require on your part Suitable, *i. e.* Infinite Confidence. The same Infinite, Absolute, Implicit belief, which you thus acknowledge due to God, is also due to Me; I am come from heaven to be the light of this lower world in Spiritual things, as the Sun is in Corporal; and whatever I speak, I require you to believe with the same confidence, as you would a particular word from heaven, or a manifest object of sight enlightened by the Sun.

This *at That time* (still I say *at That time*) when our Lord put in such a claim, and his Apostles pleaded for it, appeared very Hard, because very Unreasonable command, both to *Jews* and *Greeks*; it was *to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; for the Jews required a Sign, and the Greeks sought after Wisdom*, and he that would believe, must run counter to the whole world: for so did the Jews object to St. *Paul*, *We know that this sect is every where spoken against.*

1. *The Greeks sought after Wisdom*, and to them such a belief seemed Foolishness. Their Wisdom, was Prudence; their Religion, Virtue: The same Religion which taught to pay God infinite belief, taught them also to measure their belief toward Man by the credibility of the Speaker, or the Word by him spoken; and whatever exceeded this measure, was foolishness.

But if Religion were no less concerned than Reason, then must Impiety joyn with Foolishness, and as it doubled the Vice, so did it the Caveat: for as all change of opinion is difficult, so is that of Religion most so. The World was never possessed by any Religion so absurd, but that education and growth gave it such roots, as would not be pluckt up with ease or a little labour; yea, most Men have no other reason for their Religion but this, which equally prevails for the Worst as the Best. The Whimsies of *Mahomet* are no less confidently embraced, and zealously defended and propagated, nor perhaps have they had fewer Martyrs or Confessors, than the holy Doctrines of the blessed Jesus. The Worshippers of (God's mirror) the Sun, yea of the works of mens hands in wood and stone, are no less tenacious of their Folly, than we are of the Truth: Those who worship what they eat, believe all those damned, who will not pull out their eyes and do the same. Since therefore none could believe in Christ, without renouncing the Religion whereby he was possessed; this alone made it very difficult.

And the very meanness of the Person was a mighty prejudice against so great a claim. This had no part in the trial of *Abraham*'s faith: He was no less sure that he had Gods Command for sacrificing *Isaac*, than that he had his Promise for a blessed posterity from his Loins: but here the great difficulty, is the credibility of the Person commanding and promising such great things: That he could give his followers Eternal Life, who could not save himself from the most Shameful and Painful Death; that he could give the Inheritance of a *Kingdom*, who had not *where to lay his head*; that the Son of a Carpenter was the Son of God; that a Man of Sorrows was the Lord of Glory; these appeared such absurdities to their reason, that those who sought after *wisdom*, must needs find it extreamly difficult to swallow them.

2. *The Jews required a sign*, and such a sign, as might be no less too mighty for all those which had been wrought by *Moses*'s Rod, than was his Serpent for those of the *Egyptian* Magicians. The Founders of all other Religions wheedled the Credulous crowd into a belief of their familiarity with some God: Thus did *Numa* impose upon his *Romans*, and *Mahomet* upon his *Arabians*: But *Moses* was publickly owned by God in the eyes of the whole people, who for the space of forty years lived upon miracles under his conduct; they saw and heard the dreadful thunders and lightnings,

nings which promulgated their Laws, which they therefore believed must be immortal, because they knew them to be divine: And can they believe him to come from the same God, who prophaned the Sabbath which that Law had made the cognisance of his peculiar people?

To this prejudice derived from Religion, add another from Interest. They called the Law their Inheritance, and as such they valued it; they look't upon the גוים the profane residue of Mankind, as no less Inferior to their holy selves, than Superior to the Beasts: and that they should be levelled into an equality, how incredible it appeared, we may measure from the astonishment of the great Apostle, who speaks of it, as if he were again struck down by light and voice from heaven, *Eph.* 1.11. *By revelation he made known to me the mystery*, &c. and verse the 9th. *To make all Men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose which he proposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.* What is This so wonderful Mystery? even this, which cannot be comprehended in one clause, that the *Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promises in Christ by the Gospel.* By such amazement of this great Apostle, we may judge of his whole Nation, and by the astonishment of him, who would not have believed upon any less evidence than a revelation, we may safely measure the difficulty which lay upon all those that were trained up in the same Religion.

Another stumbling block lay quite cross their way, because cross to their expectations: They look for a *Messiah*, that by his Victories should no less advance them in Prosperity above all other Nations, than *Moses* by his Law had advanced them in Holiness: a *Messiah*, whose Person should be Illustrious, his Sword Victorious, his Reign Glorious, and *of whose Kingdom there shall be no end*, either in point of Extent or Duration; Such a *Messiah* did their Prophets promise, and the time appointed was now fulfilled; their expectations therefore were big, and their longings ardent: And must this triumphant *Messiah* now dwindle into a vagabond *Galilean*? Must their expected Triumphs sink into this dismal Promise, *He that will be my disciple, must take up his cross and follow me*! This was therefore a great stumbling block to the Understandings, because it lay cross to their Interests; they were the more Unable, because Unwilling, to believe it; which therefore required a weight of importunities and promises, sufficient to counterballance the double weight of reluctancies. Nor was this the worst, for

2. The *Danger* was at That time no less than the *Difficulty*. I say at *That time*, because That circumstance is highly considerable: As it was extraordinary in point of Danger to the Disciples, so did it require such extraordinary promises and importunities from our Lord, as might induce them both to combat all Difficulties, and outface all Danger.

In good and peaceable Times, when a Prince exerciseth his Power without opposition, as there is no Merit in Loyalty, so is there no Proclamation of Reward to it. But if he be driven from his Throne, and disabled not only to Govern his Subjects, but to Defend himself: If Loyalty be treated as Rebellion, and to assert the oppressed Prince's Right be a forfeiture of Life and Estate; in such a case, the Princes Interest concurreth with Justice, to perswade him to encourage his good Subjects with Promises Extraordinary as his Own Needs, and their Danger.

Just thus it was in those Times, when Faith made so great figure in the Gospel, that it seemed to engross the whole Duty

of

of a Christian, and all the promises of Salvation. Had it been sufficient to have believed with a Convinced, yet Silent mind, whatever the Difficulty might have been, the Safety might have equalled it: But this could not be accepted; the mouth must join with heart, *Rom.* 10. 10. *For with the Heart Man believeth unto righteousness, and with the Mouth confession is made unto salvation.* *Nicodemus* came to our Lord with the Former without the Later; for coming *by night*, and Privately owning what he was either Ashamed or Afraid Openly to profess, he is told in the Rabbinical stile, that unless by Baptism he make open Profession of his Faith, he cannot be a Christian, *Joh.* 3. To the same sense also did our Lord tell his Apostles, when he commissioned them to preach the Gospel, *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved*: not simply *he that believeth*, but *he that believeth and is baptized*; so making a Publick Profession of his Belief, and himself a Visible Member of Christ's Church.

And here those, who upon this account deny Infants to be capable of Baptism, because they are uncapable of Belief, may do well to consider the change of Times, and of the reason thereon depending. At That time, whoever did not openly profess the New and Persecuted Religion, must be supposed to joyn with the rulers in that Religion, which was publickly professed and stablished by the Laws of the Land: but now the wind bloweth from the opposite quarter, and since the Gospel is the stablished Religion, and the profession of the very Parents maketh great odds against any danger of the contrary, the Church may, upon small security from other sureties, admit any Infant for a member.

To which also we may add, that our Lord to his promise of *everlasting life* annexed another: *These signs shall follow them that believe, in my name they shall cast out Devils* &c. The miraculous powers which were Therefore at That time given, because at that time they were necessary toward planting the new Gospel, ceased with the need which required them, and for the same reason did the Method, of belief preceding baptism.

At present we are not considering the Method, but the Design of Baptism: it was an open Profession of Faith, and therewith an open Defiance to the World and all its Powers: the Rulers had no less malice in their hearts, than power in their hands, against all that should profess a Faith, which must abolish the Law of *Moses*, which they gloried in, as advancing them to a singular holiness above all other Nations, who yet were no less Enemies to the same new Religion, which must destroy their Idols. Our Saviour therefore dealeth plainly and faithfully, *He that will be my disciple, must take up his cross and follow me: He that hateth not Father and Mother, yea and his own life also, cannot be my disciple: I send you forth as lambs among wolves; ye shall be brought before Governours and Kings for my names sake*, &c.

Such hardships were not more contrary to the Appetites of flesh and blood, than to the Notions they had been educated in, of great Prosperity under the *Messiah*: They had dreamed of another kind of *Victory over the World*, than what St. *John* boasted, saying, *this is the Victory which overcometh the World, even your faith*; your faith which overcometh the world by suffering all kind of Persecutions in this life, in assurance of glorious Rewards in another.

And in this, the Faith of the Christian outvyeth That of *Abraham* himself. There was indeed a danger that he might lose his *Isaac*, if God could not restore him to life when sacrificed; but he had an experiment of God's power to give him another Son notwithstanding his old age if he could not restore the Same, But to the faithful disciples of Christ there was apparent no

not Danger only, but Certainty, of loss of their *All, Children, Parents, Lands, Liberty, yea, Life it self.*

Blessed be the gracious Providence of God, that now and for many Ages the wind is turned to the contrary point. Our Education maketh it now as difficult, and our Laws as dangerous, to deny Christ, as at first it was to confess him: and consequently whatever Extraordinary merit it might derive from those topicks, must now be lowered, and when it shall thus be reduced to its Ordinary, and permanent worth, it will appear (like Loyalty in peaceable times) a common grace, worthy of no greater than common rewards, For now its whole stock of merit is owing to its fruits, wherein also it falleth short of what it bore in the times of its planting; for at that time.

3. The Necessity of Faith was equal to the Difficulty and Danger: And indeed without This, the other two or either of them would have made the Command unreasonable.

That Prince would not deserve to be owned in the Best of times, much less to be fought for in the Worst, that should Needlesly impose Hard and Dangerous services upon his good Subjects.

To expose them to hardships and dangers of a necessary War, hath always been justified in the best Kings; and to encourage their valour with promise of suitable rewards is equally Just and Wise: But to expose them to fight with Beasts, only for pleasure of the Spectacle, was abhorred by faithful Christians when practised by wanton heathen. Let us therefore distinguish the Times.

1. This Necessity of Faith had something singular at that time when it was first exalted to such Honour. A great, and Dangerous but Necessary, and otherwise Unaccomplishable work must be performed. The Kingdom of Heaven must subdue all the resisting world: God's worship must be stript of all those Ceremonies wherewith his own hand had dresst it, and reduced to simple nakedness of spirit and truth; the partition wall must be broken down which appropriated God's holy people, *&c.* Toward so great a work he came furnished with no other power, but that of working miracles for mens conviction: and should those who were thereby convinced, hide their belief within their own breasts, this might bring some particular Persons, not whole Nations to subjection. It was therefore Necessary to call aloud not only for Belief, but for Profession of it: and since such a Profession at such a Time, must run such a gandelope, between Difficulties and Dangers, it was but reasonable, that the importunities of the Calls and the price of the Promises, should joyn with the Necessity of the Performance to outweigh so great Discouragements.

2. Though in such Extraordinary respects the Necessity be now abated, so that every Professor need not be a Preacher or Confessor in the hardest sence; yet there still remains a Permanent necessity, from the influence which Faith Alway (because Naturally) hath upon the believers Actions; and since These must alway be Holy, That must alway be indispensible.

Loyalty is Loyalty at All times. In the worst times it will Fight, in the best it will Obey: and when it hath no Occasion, will be ready upon All occasions to approve it self faithful. And Faith is Faith at all times. When the world fighteth against its Lord, it will fight against the world in his cause: it hath the same Valour when it hath not the same occasion to exercise it by suffering, as had the primitive Christians; and it hath ever the faithfulness to fight against all kinds of Enemies to his Kingdom, Flesh and Blood, and spiritual wickedness, and whatever will not have the Lord rule over it.

The Christian in the most peaceable times is a Souldier listed under the Lord's

Banners

Banner in Baptism: he must follow (when called) the Captain of his Salvation that was made perfect by sufferings; and when tempted, he must walk in the steps of his Father *Abraham*, sacrifice his Lusts, though no less dear than was his *Isaac*.

Our Lord therefore is not like some weak Princes, that upon meer unaccountable Caprice, load their good Subjects with heavy burthens, and advance worthless favourites to undeserved honors; but measureth his Laws by his Subjects Needs. What Natural Religion taught, the Gospel verifieth, Our Lord himself declared, that the reason of his coming into the world was his father's love to it, And it must be a greater mystery than any he hath required us to believe, if he should so Unkindly treat the world which he so Dearly loved, as to require them upon pain of eternal death, to believe more than is necessary for their salvation: for should he require more than is Necessary, he must do it either for some other reason, or without any reason at all. If we believe him to require faith for any Other reason, than because it is necessary for our incouragement to Holiness in order to Happiness; we dishonour him, because no other reason can be worthy of his Goodness or Majesty: If upon no other reason at all, we dishonour him, because this would contradict his Wisdom, which never acteth without good reason.

And now I hope we sufficiently discover why Faith is so much exalted in the Gospel: The reasons are partly Extraordinary and expired, partly Ordinary and permanent: The Extraordinary, derived from the circumstances wherein the Gospel was first preached: The Ordinary, from its serviceableness to the divine life which Natural Religion aimed at, but the Gospel by means of believing, exalteth with nobler arguments, as will more clearly appear, if we examine the Subject matter which Faith is to believe.

CHAP

CHAP. VI.

Of Faith in CHRIST, *as Saviour of the World.*

THAT the great things that are ſpoken of Faith, oblige us to enquire what is neceſſary for us to believe, is too clear to need Proof: yet is there nothing leſs heeded or underſtood, even by the Inquiſitive: and ſo, That Grace whoſe great Worth is derived from its Serviceableneſs to our Happineſs, by diſturbing our Peace Private and Publick, is made it's greateſt Enemy.

Our preſent Work calleth for Enquiries, not Complaints: and therefore adjourning theſe to a more proper time, we ſhall purſue the Enquiry now before us: viz. *What are thoſe ſaving Truths, to the Belief whereof, eternal Life is promiſed?*

And here our former Remarks meet us again. Our Lord avoideth Multiplying Articles of Faith, no leſs than Commands: Thoſe were but Two at moſt, *Faith and Repentance*; and ſometimes thoſe Two were reduced to One, and Either one: In the ſame manner doth he treat Faith: Sometimes it's Object is but *One*, and ſometimes *Two*, and ſometimes *Either* of the two; becauſe they are Two in Notion, but inſeparable in Action.

There are Two Kinds of Objects of Belief.

I. *The* PERSON *in whom we believe.*

II. *The* WORD *which we believe upon Credit of the* PERSON.

And the Promiſe of Eternal Life is given ſometimes to the *One*, ſometimes to the *Other*, ſometimes to *Both* joyntly.

1. Sometimes it is given to believe in the *Perſon* of Chriſt; and this is more frequently, becauſe it is the Ground whereon the other is built. Thus we find in our Lord's Diſcourſe with *Nicodemus* and *Martha, and the Cloſe of St. Johns Goſpel.*

2. Sometimes it is given to belief of the *Promiſe*. Thus St. *Paul* in his Entrance upon that accurate Diatribe concerning the *Reſurrection*, telleth the Corinthians, *This is the Goſpel by which they muſt be ſaved.* And when he pleaded, that *for the Hope of the Reſurrection he was called into queſtion*, he ſpake no leſs Truly than Wiſely: becauſe that is the Subſtance of our Belief.

3. Sometimes it is given to *Both joyntly.* As we found, *Rom.* 10. 9. *If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy Mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe in thy Heart that God hath raiſed him from the Dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.* And the *Athenians* thought St. *Paul a Setter-forth of ſtrange Gods, becauſe he ſpake ſo much of Jeſus and the Reſurrection*; ſuppoſing *Anaſtaſis* to be the Goddeſs of *Jeſus*. Theſe two are ſo nearly allied, that they cannot be ſeparated: For whoever believes in Chriſt, as the Son of God, muſt upon his *Credit* authorized by his *Reſurrection*, believe his *Promiſe*, that they ſhall have a Reſurrection Themſelves. Yet neatly as they are allied, they are not the Same, and therefore require to be treated ſeverally.

Firſt therefore we ſhall ſpeak of what

is first in order of nature, *Belief in the Person*: and this that we may do the more distinctly, we shall consider.

1. *What kind of Person our Lord requireth us to believe him to be?*

2. *What is meant by believing in him?*

I. Concerning the Former, *viz. What kind of Person our Lord requireth us to believe him*? We must consider, that at That time the World was big with Expectation, and earnest in longing for such a Person, has never blessed it since its first Creation; a Person of whom such glorious things were promised as dazled their Understandings; a Person that must excel *Moses* in Miracles, *Joshuah* in Victories, *Solomon* in Riches and Wisdom; All *Prophets* in Knowledge, and all *Kings* in Power: the *Son*, and yet the *Lord* of *David*, who should not only free them from the then galling Yoke of the *Romans*, but subdue those *Romans*, and with them all their Provinces: the time of the promised coming of this great Person was now fulfilled, and their Longings sharpned to so much the greater Keenness.

This *fulness of time* our Lord made the Subject of his first Sermon, saying, *The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand*: This was so notoriously known, that it made the Jews obstinate even to madness in defence of their City and Temple against the *Romans*; yea, it made so much, and so loud talk in all the East, that the Noise reached to *Rome*, and contributed not a little to *Vespasian's* Advancement to the Empire: because (saith the Historian) *pervebuit sermo*, there was common Talk that at That time there would arise in the East a Person that should govern the World.

Such an one had *Daniel* promised, *Dan.* 7. 13. *There was given him Dominion and Glory, and a Kingdom that All Nations and Languages should serve him*: The Title there given him, is no other than the *Son of Man*, which our Saviour oft times assumes to himself; which that we may understand how much it may import, we must consider, that the Jews had some peculiar Idioms, whereof two principally did import the eminence of the subject spoken of.

1. They left that indefinite, which they would imply to exceed any Definition: *God do so to me, and more also*, was a Curse which signified more than any Expression could define: *Therefore I will do This unto thee, and because I will do This unto thee, therefore prepare to meet thy God, O Israel*, said the Prophet; whereby he threatned a Judgment, and required an Attonement *Extraordinary and Unexpressible*.

If our Title [*Son of Man*] seem not sufficiently accounted for by this Idiom, and the Prophet *Daniel's* Prophecy; some other of his Characters will, *John* 8. 24. He saith of himself, *If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins*. The word *HE* is sufficiently indefinite, but the Original not having so much as that, is much more so. The Baptist sent two of his Disciples to enquire if he were ὁ ἐρχόμενος. *The Comer*, or *He that shall come*, and the Multitude blessed him in the *Name of the Lord*, under that Character. The *Messia* is a Great, but Indefinite Title. Anointing was a Complement of the greatest Kindness and Honor that could be bestowed on a Guest; and from that Office in festival Receptions, it was preferred to a Ceremony toward the highest Dignities. *Prophets*, *Priests*, and *Kings* were enseated by it; and our Lord is thereby chartered, but indefinitely, whether *Prophet*, or *Priest*, or *King*, or *All*.

2. Another Idiom of advancing any Thing or Person, was by entitling it to *God*; thus *Rivers of God*, *Mountains of God*, &c. were the most eminent in their Kind: *Man of God*, signified the most excellent Prophet; *Kingdom of God*, the most excellent Govenment; and *the Son of God*, was by *Daniel* made a Character of the greatest

greatest Beauty and Majesty. For whereas by that Phrase he described the *4th.* in *Nebuchadnezzar's* Furnace, we are not to imagine that he pretended to have seen the *Son of God*, and thereby to know who were like him in Garments or Countenance; but that he used that Phrase as the highest Expression of extraordinary Beauty.

These high Characters, the *Messia*, or *Christ*, and the *Son of God*, and the *Comer*, are given our Lord, sometimes severally, sometimes joyntly. St. *Paul* testifieth to the Jews, that *This Jesus that I preach unto you, is the Christ*; St. *John* professeth, *these things are written that you may believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*: and *Martha* declareth, *I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the World.* And lest it might seem possible that some other Person might be capable of all these, however extraordinary Eulogies; to exalt him *above every name that may be named*, he stileth himself, not only the *Son*, but the *Only begotten Son of God.*

The other Characters speak an unmeasurable Excellency, and this last a singular and incommunicable one: and upon this Singularity of his being *the only begotten Son of God*, expressed by his being *anointed before he came into the World*, we shall anon find him prefer himself above all that were upon less accounts called *Gods*.

These and the like high Characters speak him a Person of Supereminent and unmeasurable Greatness; a Person like (his emblem) the light, so glorious, that by our last intent view we cannot plainly discover any thing of it but this, That we cannot discover. And this is so far from hindering the Belief which he requireth, that it is the very reason why we are obliged to pay it. For as we therefore believe in the Light, because the same Brightness which dazleth our Eyes if we fix them directly upon its Fountain, plainly sheweth us every thing that it shineth on; so our Lord, whose Divinity maketh the Dignity of his Person unintelligible, is for that very reason to be believed in with our utmost Confidence. And thus himself expresseth,

II. *What is meant by believing in his Person?* For *John* 12. 35. *Jesus said* unto them, *yet a little while is the Light with you, walk while you have the Light.* ——*While you have the Light, believe in the Light, that ye may be the Children of Light.* In which Words he plainly declareth, that all Men are *Travelers*; what the Light is to Travellers, That himself is to the World; and therefore what Confidence the Traveller hath in the Light, the same must we have in Him.

Should the Wisest, the Greatest, yea, All the Men in the World, or an Angel from Heaven, contradict the Light, the Traveller would not abate his Belief in it: should any Authority whatever tell him, that is a Tree, which the Light telleth him is a Stone; should they tell him that is a Path, which the Light telleth him is a River; should they perswade him to go where the Light sheweth a Precipice, or that there is no Path where the Light sheweth a plain one; he would with a little Variation apply to them all the Authentick Rule, *Let the Light be true, but every man a Liar.*

Thus is it, that we are to believe in *Christ*: for thus *Abraham* believed in *God*, maugre all Difficulties which his Affection to *Isaac*, and all the Contradictions which his Reason could oppose, the one against his Obedience, the other against his Confidence. And this is our Saviour's Claim, *ye believe in God, believe also Me*, i. e. with the same Confidence.

Where the Importance is unvaluable, no Care can be too great: we shall therefore most carefully and distinctly consi-

der, that the Light of the Sun may be lookt upon two ways, either with a wary Eye, diligently but obliquely, observing what it shewed by its Beam; or with a direct Eye, curiously viewing and endeavouring to discover its Features. So our Belief in Christ may look upon him under two Respects: with respect to the *World*, as its *Saviour*; or with respect to his *Person*, as the *Son of God*.

I. *With respect to the Word*: Every one seeth the Sun to be its greatest Benefactor, bountifully communicating all the Comforts, yea, the very Beings, which every of its Inhabitants enjoyeth. And at this Bounty is the Reason of the Suns shining, so it is no *Less*, yea, it is *More* understood by the Traveller on his Road, than by the Philosopher in his Cell. Thus it is with the *Sun of Righteousness*, his Title is the *Saviour of the World*, and his Business is to make good his Title. This made him *rise with healing in his Wings*, and for This Reason he requireth so to be believed in, as the Sun is by the Traveller, who directeth every step by its Light.

Whatever the Capacity or Opinion of the Traveller be; whether he be an illiterate Clown, that thinketh the Sun no bigger than the Earth; whether he believe the Light to be an *Accident*, or Substance; whatever his Thoughts be of the Nature, Magnitude, Distance, *&c.* still the Sun is his faithful Guide, whenever he walks by its Light.

And that this Practical Faith is all that our Saviour requireth, seemeth plain, as by other Evidences, so by his own Words: For when the Jews came about him, and said unto him, *How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly*; and he in answer thereto, called God his Father, *they took up Stones to stone him, because* (they said) *thou being a Man, makest thy self God*; he did not, upon so pressing an Occasion, assert his Right, but abating so much as exceeded their Comprehension, satisfied Himself (that he might satisfie Them) with what might be sufficient for their Conviction to Salvation: *Is it not written in your Law* (said he) *I have said you are Gods? If he called them Gods to whom the Word of God came, and the Scriptures cannot be broken, say ye of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the World, thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God?* That he spake this in compliance with their Capacity, not their Rage, appeareth, because when they would not be appeased, he escaped with pleasure out of their Hands, since it was sufficient to their Salvation, to know how and why he came into the Word, and that (as his Work, so also) his Person was greater than ever had been in it since its Creation; he speaketh nothing of what he had been from Eternity in Himself, but what he was in Relation to the World, and in Comparison with all other Messengers of God to it.

To Them (saith he) God sent his Word by their Betters, but it is not sent To Me by my Betters, but By me to my Inferiors; They were sent into the World the common Way, and were afterward sanctified by receiving Gods Word; but I was first sanctified, and afterward sent; and if they who were Less extraordinary, were honoured with a higher Title, being called *Gods*; can it be Blasphemy in me, who am their Superior, if I take to my self a meaner Title?

Thus did he (like *Elijah*) contract himself to their Dimensions, requiring only such a Measure of Faith as was suitable to their Understanding, and his own Designs. Where he not greater than *Moses* and all the Prophets, he could not have competent Power to advance such a *Kingom of God*, as must abrogate Those Laws which were writ-

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ten by God's own Hand. It was therefore necessary he should require such a Belief in his Person, as might bring the World into subjection to his Scepter: Less than this cannot serve his Ends, and More than this he doth not require.

CHAP. VII.

Of Belief with meer Respect to the Person of Christ. Inquisitiveness concerning his Incarnation censured: First, because Impertinent.

II. *With mere respect to his Person*, it is no more necessary that we should understand what he is, than it is for a Traveller to understand the Features of the Sun. When the great Question concerning the Eternity of his Godhead first embroiled the World, the Emperor *Constantine*, by the most esteemed of his Bishops, sent to the Heads of the contending Parties, an every way gracious * Letter, perswading each of them to silence: wherein we find many Sayings for quieting the Dispute, more worth than all that since hath been written for deciding it. We shall take notice of Three.

1. He condemneth it as a silly Question, fitter for Fools or Children, than Priests or Wise Men. And this he presseth no less than eight or nine times. How justly, we may discover in three particulars.

1. *It is impertinent to our Lord's Design.* 2. *It is Fruitless to the Contemplators own purpose.* 3. *It is Dangerous.*

1. *It is impertinent to our Lord's Design.* For as the Sun doth not shine upon the World to gain to its self a small Reflexion of its Light from a Jewel, or the praise of a Philosopher, or any less reason, but only to benefit the World; so neither did the *day-spring from on high visit us* for any other reason, but to bring *healing in his Wings.*

Whoever thinks otherwise, must dishonour him more, and more effectually deny his Divinity, than ever any Heretick did: for he must suppose at least some Proportion, between the Breath of Man and the Blood of the Lord.

The Clown may think the Sun no bigger than his Bushel; but whoever hath the least Tincture of Astronomy, is astonished at the vast Disproportion, wherein the whole Earth falleth short of any one fixed Star; and when he further considereth what innumerable Multitudes more are discovered by the Telescope to his Eye, and beyond that to his Reason; upon consideration of such a stupendious Disproportion between the Earth and so many Worlds, both for Greatness and Brightness; he cannot think so highly of its poor Inhabitants, as to conceive their great Creator should be so greedy of a little of their corrupt Breath, as to purchase it with such a Fall from Heaven. Himself observed to us, that those who *exercise Authority* among Men, *are called Benefactors*: could we harbor such base Thoughts of our Lord

* Euseb. *vita* Constant. *lib.* 2. *c.* 67.

Lord, as to degrade him from the Dignity of a Benefactor, to the Meanness of a Tradesman, and that in the vilest Ware too, we must implicitly deny his Divinity; but to suppose him so unskilful to his poor Trade, as to pay for his base Ware, infinitely more than its worth; this must cast no less Dishonour upon his Wisdom than his Majesty. Yet this we must do, if we think he will grant Salvation upon no other Terms, than a Belief of the whole Truth concerning the Dignity of his Person. For this will imply, either that he Came and Suffered on purpose to purchase to himself the Honour of such a Belief, or that he denieth to his faithful Servants That Benefit which he came into the World on purpose to purchase for them.

We may do well a little farther to consider, that That part of Mankind which our Lord most favoureth, are most unable to pay him such a Belief. He made it matter of Thanks that his Father had *hid the Gospel from the Wise and Prudent, and revealed it to Babes*; and afterward St. *James* observed, that *God had chosen the Poor of this World Rich in Faith*: Yea, when the Baptist sent two of his Disciples to our Lord, asking, *art thou he that should come, or do we look for another*? our Lord answered him not in one Syllable, Negative, or Affirmative, but put him to spell out the Truth by Signs, among which this was the Last, *to the Poor the Gospel was preached*: which as it was a Completion of Prophecies, so was it a Sign of the *Messia*, equal to his *mighty Works*. And must the Poor, who were the First-Born of the Gospel, whose Condition our Lord honoured with his Birth, as he did their Persons with his Conversation, who in all Parts of the World, First embraced the Faith, and in all Ages make the much greatest Numbers; must they be excluded from the Benefit of Christ's Redemption, only because by his Providence, they are excluded from the Means of Understanding the Mystery of his Incarnation? They may with their humble Simplicity outdo the Subtilest School-men in Obedience to our Lords Commands, *i. e.* they may with less Knowledge, produce more and better Fruit: and must They perish for want of such a Belief, as is morally impossible for them to acquire, though they desire and endeavor no less to conform their *Belief* to the Doctrines, than their *Practices* to the Commands of their Saviour?

That such a Conceit is no less contrary to the Belief of the First Preachers and Believers of the Gospel, than it is to the first Dictates of Reason and Religion, no Enquirer can be unsatisfied. St. *Paul* finding Disciples at *Ephesus* that had *not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*, but had only been baptized *into John's Baptism*, told them no more of Christ but this, that *John indeed baptized with the Baptism of Repentance, saying unto the People, that they should believe on him that should come after him*, i. e. *on Jesus Christ*; *when they heard this, they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus. And when* Paul *had laid his Hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with Tongues and prophesied.* When the *Ethiopian* Eunuch believed that *Jesus Christ is the Son of God*, of whom *Isaiah* prophesied; *Philip* immediately admitted him to Baptism. At one Sermon, Three Thousand became Disciples: Can any Man imagine that they understood the whole Mystery of the Incarnation?

In the next succeeding Ages, as the Gospel spread farther over the World; so did the Curiosity of Doctors improve in explaining its Mystery, and their Zeal in pressing those Explications upon the Belief of Disciples: Yet in *Justin Martyr's* Time, though they themselves believed the Godhead of Christ, they did not so impose this Belief upon All Disciples, as

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to deny Them to be Christians, who did not come up to it. This is plain by the Words of that Father to * *Tryphon* the Jew: *Though* (saith he) *I shall not prove that Christ is God otherwise, than by proving that This is the Christ, and that it was foretold that he should be such; yet it will be just that thou shoulaest believe me to be deceived in that one Point, and not deny that this is the Christ, though he seem to be a Man born of Men, and said to be chosen to be Christ: For there are some (my Friends) among us, who profess him to be the Christ, and affirm him to be Man born of Men, with whom indeed I do not agree; nor will many speak so, who are of the same Opinion with me.* By which Words it is plain, that however the Belief of Christs Godhead was then most generally received, yet were not the otherwise minded excluded from the benefit of his Redemption as Unbelievers.

Such was the Faith, and such the Charity of the best Christians, before Prosperity had made them wanton, and Disputacity fierce. But now that the Question hath cost so much Pains, Contention and Blood, it hath gotten a new Value, not from any new intrinsick Worth, but from the Price which it hath cost. This is the only Reason of the Value of Diamonds, and This Question is like them, Costly, Hard, and Useless; and to most Eyes, as bright too. For it seemeth that the Honour due to our Lord's Person, must impart a suitable Value to every Question wherein it is concerned; and then it will follow, that we cannot slight this Great one, without some Neglect or Contempt of our Lord himself.

But on the contrary, the Worth of a *Proposition* lieth not in its *Matter*, but its *Form*; not in its *Terms*, but their *Connexion*; and if this be unworthy of Those, the Proposition is so far from being the more to be valued for the Dignity of its Terms, that it is to be despised, and perhaps, condemned for debasing them, by a Position unworthy of them. Though it be not reasonable, yet its possible to make a Pin of Gold; in such a case, it will not be an Undervalument to the Metal, to say, that such a Pins Point is nothing worth, because it hath very little of the Metal, and nothing of Serviceableness in it; but we must justly censure him that should put that soft noble Metal, to an Office fit only for a baser and harder one. It is not the Matter, but the Point of this Question which is now under Consideration, and we do not disregard, but honour our Lords Person, when we censure a Dispute which employeth in it Boys play.

Such was the Judgment (we see) of the great *Constantine*, when the Game was first set on foot; and such afterwards was that of *Leonas*, sent by *Constantius*, to moderate in the Council of *Seleucia*, who finding the Bishops fierce and endless at this *Pushpin*, dismissed them with this just Reprimand, * *Go, and play the Fools at Home.*

* *Ad Tryph. Jud.*

* *Socrat. Lib.* 2. *Cap.* 23.

CHAP. VIII.

It is Fruitless towards the Inquirers own Satisfaction.

II. A Second Evidence of the Folly of such an Enquiry, is this, That it is *Fruitless* toward the Questionists own Satisfaction; This is pressed by the good Emperor, in these Words, *How few are there that can exactly enough discern, for worthily*

worthily enough express the force of Matters so weighty and abstruse? Or if there be any that believeth he can so do, how few are there among the Multitude, whom he can enable to understand it? And this is lively represented in our Lord's Emblem: The Brightness of the Sun, which to the Traveller plainly sheweth his Way; but if looked upon with a fixed and steddy View, endeavoring to discover the Features of his Face, will shew nothing but the Weakness of the Gazers Eyes; which now it will not instruct, but Dazle; and the Light of the Gospel to a faithful Believer, sheweth so much of our Lord's Person, as must make us trust in his Words concerning the Way to Salvation; but if we will needs enquire into the *Mysteries* of his *Divinity* and *Incarnation*, we shall find our Understandings no less confounded by the Brightness of the Mystery, than our Eyes are by that of the Sun. And of this the Holy Ghost seemeth to warn us, not only by a careful Silence concerning our Lords Genealogy, but by express Types and Prophecies concerning its Inscrutability.

This was so known a Character of the *Messia*, that the Jews, thence derived an Objection, *We know this Man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no Man knoweth whence he is: He is a Priest for ever, after the Order of Melchisedec*, of whom it is industriously observed, that he was *without Father, without Mother, and without Descent.* Two Evangelists trace his, (our Lords) Genealogy: but as they derive it not from his real, but supposed Father; so do they take two severy ways, not to satisfie, but amuse us. What is this but to admonish us against Curiosity? The Pedigree of his Flesh might easily have been, either Cleared, or Unmentioned. Had the Evangelists been wholly silent concerning it, we had less wondered: but that they should profess to instruct us, yet doubly disappoint us; first, by deriving it from a wrong Father, and then by distracting us between two Ways; what is this, but to verifie the Prophets Description of the Messia, *Who shall declare his Generation?* And what doth this so careful Concealment of his Generation, according to his Human Nature, signifie more plainly, than a warning against searching after the Eternal Generation of his Divinity? If it were needless (and therefore left impossible) to prove him derived from *David*, which was one of his most revealed Characters; how can it be otherwise, to understand That Generation of his, which must needs be so much the more above our Understanding, as the Nature of God is above our own?

But Licourishness after forbidden Fruit, is the Original Sin, whereof all the Sons of *Eve* are guilty, and the Christian World hath been a greater Example, both of the Sin and the Punishment. For as soon as the Emperor became a *Nursing Father*, Teaching Fathers grew wanton. And the Bishop of *Alexandria* boldly answered the Prophets Question, *I will declare his Generation*; but he did it in such nice manner, that *Arius* a Presbyter, cavelled at it as contradictious; and while either of them was tenacious of his own Assertion, all the Eastern Churches were embroiled with fierce Contentions. To quence this Fire the good Emperor sent to the Heads of the contending Parties, his abovementioned Letter, which not availing, he convened a General Council at *Nice*, of all the Bishops of the Empire, who justified the Bishop, and excommunicated the Presbyter, who afterwards exhibited a Confession of his Faith to the Emperor, who glad to find it consonant to the *Nicene*, sent it to a Council then assembled

bled at *Hierusalem*, That Council approved of it, and sent their approbatory Letters, both to the Emperor and the Bishop of *Alexandria*, whom thereupon the Emperor required to admit *Arius* to Communion. But the Bishop answered, that *Arius* was excommunicated by a General Council, and may not be restored by any less Authority. And that the Disobedience might appear Necessary, an important word is found wanting in *Arius*'s confession. And that word is now made matter both of Condemnation against *Arius* who omitted it in his confession, and of Disputes among the Bishops, who subscribed the *Nicene*.

For thus speaks one of the most partial Historians. *Socr. l. 2. c. 18. As we plainly find by several Epistles which after the Council Bishops wrote to one another, the word* [Consubstantial] *grievously troubled some of their minds: in sifting whereof while they spent much time and pains, and too nicely endeavouring to describe its force, they raised among themselves an intestine war, and whae they did, differed nothing from fighting in the dark; for they seemed not at all to understand why they railed at each other.* A hundred and fifty years had this blind dispute raged, and at last was Determined as Blindly as it had been managed. For the Emperor *Theodosius*, finding *Constantine*'s way unsuccessful, because the zeal of neither would admit of Silence or Toleration; took another course, by Silencing the One, and Authorizing the Other: So he forbad all men to contradict what was taught by the Bishop of *Rome* and *Alexandria*.

Thus was the Knot cut which would not be untyed: Yet are we not even thus Disentangled. For later Ages, disputing the question in the Schools with less Heat, but more Subtilty, have determined the question quite otherwise than *Athanasius* had done. For thus saith *Athanasius* in his Dialogue of this Subject: *The divine nature is common to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as the human nature is common to Peter, James, and John.* And when the Adversary objects, that then *Father, Son and Holy Ghost must be Three Gods, as Peter, James and John are Three men*: He denieth that *Peter, James and John are Three men if they be of one Mind because then they are one in the Lord: But a Heathen, a Jew, and a Christian, are three men, because of three minds.* And with a nearer resemblance he addeth *the Father, Son, and H. G. are as Bishop, Priest, and Deacon; but Bishop, Priest and Deacon are* ὁμοούσιοι, *therefore so are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.* Athan. *dial. de trinit.*

And might not a Heathen at this rate justifie Polytheism, provided his Gods disagreed not among themselves? The School men therefore will not stand to this state of the question, but distinguish between *Person* and *suppositum rationale* which (yet) they cannot do as to satisfie themselves, and therefore shelter themselves in their impregnable fort, *Mystery* and thence thunder upon the adversaries both of This and of another no less beloved *Mystery*: For they make this their cock-argument for *Transubstantiation*: That since the Scripture is no less express for the *One* than the *Other*, and the Contradictions no less gross in the One than in the Other, therefore we must embrace the one as well as the other.

To this Objection of the *Romanists*, and to others of the *Unitaries*, we have found an Answer, that we must not infer from our Own Nature to God's; for that Ours is Finite, and God's is Infinite: Three Persons among us are Three Men, because

ney agree in one Common Nature; but
he Divine Nature is not a Common one,
ut a Singular; and therefore Three
Persons do not make Three Gods. If you
nderstand not this, you must not Won-
er; or at least, you must not Gainsay it:
or it is a *Mystery*, which Reason may not
retend to fathom.

Why, if it be a *Mystery*, and must still
e so, to what purpose do we Enquire into
t, or Dispute concerning it?

The General that marched his Army a
hole dark night, and in the morning
ound himself in the same place whence
e marched, would never have so harassed
Himself and Them, had he known he
hould have gotten nothing but sweat and
irt by his pains. And if we know we
must at last lie down in the same dissatis-
action, which the very name of a Myste-
y importeth, why should we not do it
ather Without, toyl than After it? To
ispute concerning a *Mystery*, and at the
ame time confess it a *Mystery*, is a con-
radiction as great as any in the greatest
Mystery.

That it was a Mystery to those very
Councils which determined it, may ap-
ear, not only from the various Confessi-
ns made by several Councils, (whereof
ocrates reckoneth no less than Nine,) or
he Contrary determinations of several
ounter-Councils, (who condemned each
thers as the Emperors chanced to influ-
nce them,) but by the wavering of the
ery same Council: For that of *Sirmium*
amed two or three, one whereof they
oul fain have reneged, and laboured all
hat's possible to call in all its Copies.

Mysteries are seldom barren, nor hath
his been so. This hath not indeed been
o fruitful as That of Transubstantiation,
ut it hath brought forth sufficient, and
ore than the best understanding can well
maintain. If Reason cannot comprehend how there can be three Persons in the same Individual Nature; no more can it, how the same Individual Person can have Two Natures, and those so unequal as the Human and Divine. To avoid this, there can be but two ways imaginable in Reason; either Christ must be Two Persons, because he hath two such different Natures; or He must have but One Nature, because he is but One Person: And either of these had its advocate.

That *Nestorius* asserted two Persons in Christ, if it appear not by his express words, is inferred from his exception against the Blessed Virgins Eulogy. He said she ought not to be stiled *Mother of God*, and This raised Dissentions over all the Eastern Churches, so like those that were begotten upon the other *Mystery*, that another Historian describeth them in the very same words: *Men fought as in the dark, now one way, and then another; and what they asserted they immediately denied.* To determine the dispute, a Council is called, which condemneth *Nestorius*; who thereupon was himself quiet, but could not make the question so.

Eutyches on the other hand asserted, that the Divine Nature swallowed up the Human; so that, however they had been Two Before conjunction, yet Afterward they were but One. This also made great stirs; a Provincial Conncil at *C. P.* deprived him, then a more general one at *Ephesus* restored him, and deprived the Bishop of *C. P.* Then *Leo* Bishop of *Rome*, whose Letters had been slighted by the Council of *Ephesus*, obtains of the Emperor a General Council at *Calcedon*: There *Dioscorus*, that had been President of the former Council, is accused of divers uncanonical Proceedings; and that he might be baited as an Heretick, the Epistle of *Leo*

Bishop

Biſhop of *Rome*, and another of *Cyril*, Predeceſſor to *Dioſcorus* in the See of *Alexandria*, were read; which done, the Biſhops in Council cried out, *This is the faith of the Fathers, This is the faith of the Apoſtles, We all believe ſo, the Orthodox believe ſo, Anathema to them that do not believe ſo; Peter hath declared ſo by Leo, the Apoſtles taught ſo, Leo piouſly & truly hath taught ſo; This is the faith of Archbiſhop Leo, Pope Leo believeth ſo, Leo and Cyril believe ſo*, &c. And when at the receſs, the queſtion was to be cleared, it was propoſed in this form, *viz. Whether do you agree with Dioſcorus, who ſaith, that Chriſt conſiſteth of two Natures; or with Leo, who ſaith there are two Natures in Chriſt?* they cried, *they believed Leo, and held for Eutychians all that contradicted them.* The very queſtion in its terms was a Myſtery, but the bottom was Clear: *Dioſcorus* had ſlighted the authority of the Biſhop of *Rome*, and the Councils buſineſs was more to advance that See above all Churches, by vindicating its authority againſt *Dioſcorus*, than to aſſert the truth againſt *Eutyches*; and they were joyntly provided for in the ſenteuce, which ſaith, —*Therefore the moſt holy and moſt bleſſed Archbiſhop of the great and ancient Rome, Leo, by us and the preſent Council, and the bleſſed and ever to be praiſed Peter, who is the rock and baſe of the Catholick Church, and foundation of the Orthodox Faith, hath deprived him* (Dioſcorus) *of all Epiſcopal Dignity, and utterly abdicated him from all Sacerdotal miniſtry.* Yet did not ſo Pontifical a Sentence fright the Emperor *Baſiliſcus*, ſo as to hinder him from writing a circulatory Letter, wherein he condemned this decision of *Leo*, and all the acts of this Council of *Calcedon*, requiring them to be burnt whereever met with: nor any of the Biſhops of *Aſia*, either from ſubſcribing That Letter of the Emperor's, or ſending to him Another of their own, wherein they prayed him, *not to ſend any other contrary [to] it; otherwiſe the world would be overthrown [by] Sedition, That Council of Calcedon having oc[ca]ſioned infinite bloodſhed.*

After this, when the Emperor *Heraclius* endeavoured to perſwade *Catholicus* to believe (as himſelf did) that Chriſt had *two Natures*, and was by him asked, whether he had alſo *two Wills, and two Actions*; puzzeled at ſo ſurprizing a queſtion, he ſent [it] to the Patriarch of *C. P.* who anſwered [it] negatively: but the Biſhop of *Hieruſalem* convened his Suffragans, and demonſtrated, that thoſe who believe but *One Will* muſt believe but *One Nature*; and then the Emperor publiſhed an Edict, that *men muſt not aſſert either that there is One or Two Wills and Actions in Chriſt.* But his Grandſon called a Council which aſſerted *Two Wills*, and anathematized them who aſſerted but *One*.

Yet after this again, the great Emperor *Juſtinian* began to compel the Biſhops to confeſs, *that the body of Chriſt was not capable of any ſuffering or change*; and had not death prevented the accompliſhment of his deſign, he had not only Reſtored the *Eutychian* Hereſy, but Outdone it.

Thus have we pointed (and only pointed) as ſome of the Many intangling Queſtions, which puzzeled and divided the ſubtileſt wits of ſeveral Ages, and were at laſt decided by no other Evidence, but of Imperial and Papal Authority; ſufficient to Silence diſputes, but not to Stabliſh truth. And who is he that is not diſcouraged from giving a Confident aſſent to what is thus way obtruded upon his belief; or ſearching into thoſe Myſteries, that have ſo confounded the greateſt Clerks? Who can penetrate into ſuch Hypermetaphyſical Niceties, or reconcile ſuch oppoſite Aſſertions? Who can moderate between the Patrons and Adverſaries of Conſubſtantia-

ity, then between its Patrons Themſelves, nd then again between its Firſt Patrons nd the Schoolmen? Between the Ortho-ox and the Neſtorians, on one ſide, and utychians on the other?

We have before proved ſuch a work leedleſs to ſaving Faith, becauſe the Poor, *e.* the Greateſt and (perhaps the) Beſt art of the world may be ſaved without ; and now we find it Impoſſible to be ccompliſhed by the greateſt Clerks, be-auſe the more they Search into it, the ore they are Confounded: And if Au-ority muſt at laſt determine it, what etter than that of the Great *Conſtantine*, hich doth not give Approbation to Ei-her of the Sides, but cenſureth Both, not f Error, but of Folly?

Chap. IX. *It is Dangerous.*

I. A Third evidence of the folly of ſuch an Enquiry is this, that it *Dangerous*. He that looketh upon the ce of the Sun with a fixt eye, loſeth more an his Labour; for he hurteth his Eye; id Story ſpeaks of ſome, that quite loſt eir ſight by it. *He that pryeth into the ſtery will be oppreſſed with the glory*, is a nown Aphoriſm; he that boldly aſſert-h any thing concerning it, runneth him-lf upon Danger ſo much Greater, by how uch Higher the Matter of the queſtion is, id by how much Greater the Difficulty of keeping right, without making a rong ſtep.

The good Emperor in his abovementi-ned Letter, gave good warning of this ouble danger, *We ought to reſtrain our ſelves om talking, leſt when We cannot ſufficiently plain the Queſtion, or our Hearers cannot fficiently underſtand our Meaning; either y the people be driven upon a neceſſity of laſphemy or Contention.*

The Danger is double. Firſt, Leſt the Heighth of the Queſtion runs us into Blaſphemy; and then, leſt the Difficulty of it run us into Error: we ſay nothing of the Danger of loſing Charity by contention, That being too ſenſibly proved by Experience.

1. There is *danger* of *Blaſphemy*: for tho' the Queſtion appear Silly upon the two accounts now mentioned, yet is the Deciſion Formidable, becauſe of the concern which our Lord's perſon hath in it. Soon after the Council of *Nice* had determined it, *the Biſhops began to diſagree among themſelves while they too curiouſly examined the word ὁμοούσιος: for one ſide thought that thoſe who uſed that word ſpake Blaſphemy, as thinking the Son to have no ſubſtance of his own; and the other ſide accuſed thoſe who thought otherwiſe, and hated them as Heathens, becauſe they brought in the worſhip of Many Gods.* On either ſide, the fall is dreadful, and if we be ſo fool-hardy as to adventure our ſelves upon ſo Dangerous a Precipice, what Commiſſion have we to expoſe our Lord's Honour, or our Brother's Soul to the hazard? If the bold enquirer Eſcape the danger of Error at Laſt, he is already fallen into a great one, by ſo mean an opinion of our Lord's Perſon, as to think it Comprehenſible.

We ſometimes ſee Children in meer Sport and Bravery walk on the top of high and narrow Walls, and this we allow as pardonable to their green underſtandings; but in a full grown man, we ſhould cenſure the Folly equal to the Danger; and both the one and the other ſo much greater, by how much the Wall were both Higher and Narrower: What then muſt we judge of thoſe, that adventure upon the double danger, of Error from the Abſtruſeneſs of the queſtion, and Blaſphemy from the Heighth of it? Either party chargeth the other with no leſs than Blaſphemy

phemy; and he that will adventure himself in such a Controversie, had need of a steady head, and firm footing. But,

2. This is a second danger, that we have *no firm ground* to go upon. How Unsound all Topicks are, we need no other evidence but this, that all are challeng'd by either party with equal assurance. *Scriptures* the *Arians* capt with the Orthodox. *Antiquity*, they ever claimed with the same confidence. *Councils*, determined sometimes on one side, and sometimes on the other, as the Emperors chanced to influence them. The only advantage of the Catholicks, is long Possession, and that, after Sentence. This may suffice to silence the adverse side, but hardly to satisfie either the one or the other, if those Historians may be trusted, whose professed partiality to the prevailing side, hath preserved their works from Time and the Emperors's Edict. They have indeed so handled matters, as to hide much, and varnish all; yet even so, we may pick out enough to justifie an appeal, by observing how that Possession was first obtained, then continued, and at last settled.

1. The Controversie was *first decided* by the great Council of *Nice*, whose Decree therein hath ever been esteemed equal to Scripture, even by those who in other things renege its Authority. Yet in this, rather than any other subject may we wave it, upon a sufficient reason offered us by another Council, which confirmed both that Council of *Nice* and *Arius*'s Confession. For that of *Antioch* in their Letters to every City justifie themselves in these words, * *We do not follow* Arius, *but receive him when he cometh to us*; *for how can it be said that we who are Bishops, follow* Arius *who is but a Presbyter*? If this have any sence, it must be of as good force at *Nice* as at *Antioch*; and thereby, we may judge of the Sentence, which first determined the controversie, not by the Merit of the cause, but Interest of the parties.

2. The *Progress* of the Controversie was of the same piece. For when *Arius*, after his Condemnation, exhibited such a confession of his Faith, as satisfied both the Emperor and the Council, then sitting at *Hierusalem*; and came with Letters from both, to his Bishop to be restored; his Bishop refused it, saying, that it was *not lawful to restore one that was excommunicated by the whole Church*; the Emperor angry at the affront, sendeth his mandatory Letter, threatning to deprive him if he disobeyed: And now the Controversie was transplanted, from *Bishop* against *Presbyter*, to *Ecclesiastick* Authority against *Secular*. For though a pretence was found, to cavil at the want of an important word in *Arius*'s confession, yet that this was no better than a mere pretence, appears, because many who had subscribed the Decree of the Council of *Nice*, seconded the Emperor against *Athanasius*, who a Council at *Tyre* condemned, and the Emperor Banished to *Treves*, where he remained during the Emperor's Life.

After whose death the Emperor *Constantine* sent him back to his Bishoprick, alledging that his Father intended it, had not death prevented him. After the death of this Emperor, *Constantius* again banished him, and he fled to the Bishop of *Rome*, who recommended him to *Constans* Emperor of the West, who so espoused him and his cause, and wrote so effectually in his behalf to his Brother *Constantius*, as to requite him upon pain of a War to restore him.

Constantius for peace's sake complied, and after the death of both of his Brethren, Patrons of *Athanasius*, upon sentence of a Council at *Antioch*, deprived him; he fleeth again to *Rome*, whose Bishop again em-

* *Socrat. li. 2. c. 7.*

braceth

braceth him, not only as a Champion of *Eccleſiaſtical* Power againſt *Secular*, but as an opportune occaſion of advancing the *Roman* See above all other *Chriſtian Churches*. For by his Pontifical Letters he commanded the Biſhops of the Eaſt, at a day by himſelf named, to ſend their Deputies to give him account of their proceedings againſt *Athanaſius* and his party, threatning to deprive them, if they acted any more in ſuch manner. The Eaſtern Biſhops ſcoffed at ſuch his Letters, and in a Council at *Sardis* excommunicated him for communicating with thoſe whom themſelves had excommunicated, and the Weſtern Biſhops in requital excommunicated the Eaſtern; ſo from a controverſie between *Eccleſiaſtical* and *Secular* Authority, roſe an immortal Schiſm between the *Weſtern* and *Eaſtern* Churches; the latter whereof, though they agreed in oppoſition to the Uſurpations of the See of *Rome*, yet grievouſly contended among themſelves in That queſtion, which was the Mother of all Contentions.

After one hundred and fifty years ſtruggling, the Emperor had this account given him, (*a*) That the Weſtern Churches were kept quiet, but the Eaſtern were full of tumult. If we examine the Reaſon of the Former part of the aſſertion, and the Truth of the Latter, we find, that the *Weſtern Biſhops* were eaſier to be led by the great Biſhop of *Rome*, not only by reaſon of the Greatneſs of his City, but by reaſon of the Smalneſs of their own Underſtandings; which were ſuch, that at the Council of *Arminum*, the greateſt of all for number, they were circumvented by the Subtiler Greeks, and that ſo groſly (ſaith the (*b*) Hiſtorian) that when it was propoſed, whether they would worſhip Chriſt or ὁμοούσιον, they cried they believed not *in homoouſium, but Chriſt*. As for the Later part of the aſſertion, the ſame Hiſtorian, *ca.* 2. ſays, that the *Arians* had all the Eaſtern Churches except that of *Hieruſalem*.

3. The long and miſchievous controverſie was at laſt Setled by *Theodoſius*; who having received his Inſtructions and Baptiſm from a *Conſubſtantialiſt*, required all his Subjects to conform to *That Religion, which* Peter *the Prince of the Apoſtles from the beginning had delivered to the* Romans, *and which at that time* Damaſus *Biſhop of* Rome *and* Peter *Biſhop of* Alexandria *held*; *and That Church only ſhould be eſteemed Catholick, which worſhipped the Divine Trinity with equal Honour*; *and thoſe who held the other, ſhould be called Hereticks, made Infamous and puniſhed.*

This we may therefore call *Setling* the controverſie, becauſe thenceforth all ſucceeding Emperours and Biſhops wrote after this Copy; and both the parties have ever worn thoſe Titles, which the Emperour by his Imperial Power (as the unqueſtionable Fountain of Honour) was pleaſed to beſtow upon them.

Behold now the ground, on which one of our Fundamental Articles of Faith is Built! Behold the juſtice of that plea, which from ſuch a poſſeſſion would preſcribe to our Belief! We have traced it from its ſpring, with no worſe intent than to appeal from the great *Theodoſius*, who put it Above diſpute, to the greater *Conſtantine*, who put it Below diſpute; and to ſilence the clamour of Hereſie againſt One party, by ſilencing the whole Controverſie in Both.

And certainly, whoever ſhall carefully obſerve, how the now ſtabliſhed Doctrin was from firſt to laſt advanced by groſs partiality of the moſt guilty kind, and at laſt impoſed by a Novice Emperour, upon Implicit Faith in two Biſhops, of whoſe

(a) *Sozomen. li.* 7. *ca.* 4. (b) *Ruffin. li.* 1. *c.* 21.

Sees

Sees the One brought it into the World, and the Other maintained it, and a new coined Tradition lately obtruded by the guiltier of those Sees, but Unpleaded, because Unheard of, in those former Long and Miserable times, which it Might and Ought to have delivered from the convulsions they suffered: Whoever I say shall carefully observe this, and withal, what foul tricks the Church of *Rome* used in the West, and with what ill success in the East, whose Churches did at last more universally embrace *Arius*'s opinion than at first they condemned it; may be tempted to number the *Athanasian* among the *Roman* Doctrins, and cannot but think it fairly dealt with, if (its boasted possession pardoned) it be left upon the same level with the *Arian*, equally unworthy, not only of our Faith, but of our Study.

If further we consider (what the Historian expresly declareth) that at the rise of this controversie, most of the Bishops understood not its meaning; we cannot think it necessary to Salvation, that every private Christian should believe That as an Article of Faith, which the best Ages of the Church thought not worth knowing.

And if Bishop *Alexander* himself, the first Author of the Nicety, and Head of the party, thought fit to tolerate the opposite *Arians* (as the same Historians aver,) we can ill pretend to Charity, if we allow them no Title to God's Pardon, or his Churches Communion.

And more or less than this we pretend not: we retort not *Theodosius*'s sentence of Heresie, Infamy, or Punishment; we accuse none but the Uncharitable of either side; nor mention Blasphemy, but only to perswade Silence, as the securest way to escape it; or Heresie, but only as a warning to Herd with the Primitive Christians and Martyrs, who departed this World before this unhappy question came into it, and are saved without Dispute.

The *Athanasians* abhor Polytheism no less than do the *Arians*: If their Positions seem to infer it, they deny the Consequence; if this contradict the rules of Reasoning, they avow it, for they allow *Reason* no hearing in *Mysteries* of Faith. If this make them *Hereticks*, it is not in Religion, but in Logick.

On the other side, the *Arians* profess to believe of Christ whatever himself or his Apostles have spoken; and where one expression in Scripture seemeth to contradict another, they take such a course to reconcile them, as the Laws and Customs of all the World direct. It is very frequent for Rhetorick to Exceed, but never to Diminish the Grammatical character of a person, whose honour the writer professeth to advance; and upon this account they think it more reasonable, that those expressions which exalt our Saviours Person to an Equality with the Father, should stoop to those which speak him Inferiour; than, that those which speak him Inferior, should be Strained up to those which speak him Equal: And however, this is the Safer way, since it will lead us to such a belief as will Suffice for That end, for whose sake alone Belief it self is required.

He that so believeth in Christ, as the Traveller doth in the Light, that with confidence in his Promises ordereth every step by the direction of his Precepts, knowing that no Ordinary, much more no Wise and Good man, will condemn those Means as insufficient, which effect the End for whose sake they are Prescribed; will not doubt, but his diligence in his gracious Lord's Service will obtain his Pardon for any sincere error, though it fall short of full payment of Due honour to his Person; yea, he will believe, that to think other-

otherwiſe, were an error more Unpardonable, becauſe more Diſhonourable, to That Juſtice and Goodneſs, which make his chief character.

Yea, if from his Clemency in Pardoning, we turn to his Juſtice in Puniſhing; either party may in that Court plead for Juſtification.

This is the ſum of the Promiſes given by our Lord to ſuch as believe in him. He that ſo believeth in Him as the Traveller doth in the Light, ſhall in the end as certainly attain Eternal Life, as the Traveller doth his Journeys end; though concerning our Lord's Perſon he may be as much miſtaken, as the Ignorant, but Induſtrious Traveller, who knoweth nothing of the Greatneſs of the Sun's Body, or the Nature of its Light. For as the End when Accompliſhed, juſtifieth the Means to be Sufficient; ſo a Divine Life juſtifieth the Faith that Worketh it, and the Perſon that Hath it.

But Faith cannot produce This Effect, further than it proceedeth from the Perſon to his Words; which therefore only are believed to be True, becauſe the Speaker is believed to be Faithful.

We muſt therefore proceed to enquire, What are thoſe Sayings of our Lord, which upon the credit of his *Perſon*, Saving Faith is to believe in order to Eternal Life?

Chap. X. *Of the* WORD *or Matter which is the Object of Faith.*

THus far we have conſidered the *PERSON* in whom we are to believe: Come we now to the other object of Faith, the *WORD* or Matter, which we muſt take upon credit of that Perſon. This maketh more trouble in the World than its difficulty requireth. The diſagreements of the Reformed among themſelves is a ſcandal to the Romaniſts, who thence infer, That there is no reſt but in the Boſom of their Church, which will embrace none who do not ſubmit their underſtandings to her Dictates. The Reformed, beſide Recrimination, (which is perhaps a Sufficient, but not Honourable plea,) anſwer, that their diſagreements concern not *Fundamental*, but only *Indifferent* truths. Hereupon the Romaniſts call for a Catalogue of Fundamentals: and did they do it ſincerely, Charity would require a compliance with the demand; but as long as they profeſs themſelves obliged to believe all the determinations of their Council of *Trent*, it is plain, that ſuch a Liſt would do them no other ſervice, but to be caſt as a bone of contention among thoſe, who according to the Largeneſs or Streightneſs of their minds, judge more or Fewer Articles neceſſary.

Our excellent Dr. *Hammond*, to ſilence the clamorous with a juſt character of a *Fundamental*, hath written an expreſs Treatiſe, diſcovering that the word importeth Relation to a *Building*, which muſt be thereupon ſuperſtructed; and ſince holineſs of life is the Building, every Article of Faith muſt be juſt ſo far Fundamental, as it ſupporteth That Building. This is a Great Truth; but how Inſufficient for our Satisfaction, needeth

no

no other evidence than the admirable Doctor's own Enumeration, which every one will not receive for adequate: It is like an Advertisement in a Gazette, which however Exact, cannot secure me from Mistake, if I meet the Man described.

We shall therefore shew, not only the Marks, but the Person; not only such Qualifications as are necessary to make a Truth worthy to be matter of Faith; but those individual Truths, which our Lord hath expresly advanced above all their Fellows to that Dignity.

I. The Qualifications for Matter of Faith must be principally these,

1. It must be *Easie to be understood by the meaneſt Capacity. To the Poor the Gospel was preached*, and by such it must be understood, that it may be Believed. Beside plain Justice, which will not Reap where it hath not Sown; beside what we have heard of the Apostle's Boast, that the *light of the Gospel cannot be hid, but to those whose eyes* are not only Dimm'd, but quite *Blinded*; and of his Jealousie, lest the *Corinthians* minds *should be corrupted from the Simplicity which is in Christ*: Beside these and other Evidences, it is worth Observation, that the same Apostle in his Epistle to the *Romans*, wherein he disputeth against the Jews, in behalf of the *Righteousness which is by Faith*, as opposed to *that which is by the Law*, is careful to prevent any Conceit, that the Matter of Faith was more Obscure than that of the Law; and therefore *ch.* 10. *v.* 6. *&c.* he reciteth the Boast of *Moses*, Deut. 30. 12. applying them to Faith in Christ: No Height, nor Depth, nor Distance of any kind, putteth it out of reach; it is not only in our Eye, but in our Mouth; and to put the Truth beyond suspicion, in the 9th *Verse* he giveth us a plain account both of Person and Matter: *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved*; *and this* (saith he) *is the word of Faith which we preach.* By which and the following words it is plain that Apostle was so far from thinking it an Honour, that he judged it a great Defect, if there were any Difficulty in Matter of Faith.

It is true, he speaketh with much amazedness in his Epistle to the *Ephesians* of a great Mystery, which (yet) though it seemed hard to him to be believed, is easie enough to be understood; for it signified only this, That the Gentiles were Fellow heirs of the Promises with the Jews: And when he instructeth *Timothy* how to behave himself in the House of God, he telleth him of the *great Mystery of Godliness*, which concerneth only the *Person* to be believed in, but not the Matter to be believed. And in no other word of Scripture do we meet the least Intimation of any Boast or Confession, that Faith hath any hard Task for the the Understaning to perform.

2. It must be *an expreſs Word of God*; so saith the Apostle in the 17th *Verse*, *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* And so saith the very Nature of Faith: It is Justice to God's Veracity, and therefore can have nothing to do, where there is no *Word* to believe.

It must not be denied, but plain Reason is another Word of God; and therefore what that inferreth by incontestable Consequence from a written word, must be received with a Belief equal to the Evidence of that Consequence: But if the Relation between the written Word and rational Consequence be so remote, that none but a skilful Herald can derive its Pedigree; then is a good Christian no more obliged to believe such an Inference, than is every good Subject to be a good Herald.

That our Lord trebled his Command upon St. *Peter*, *to feed his Lambs*, we believe with utmoſt aſſurance, becauſe we find it in the written Word, and thence infer that he gave him Authority and Power to preach the Goſpel, inſtead of his former employment in Fiſhing, becauſe plain reaſon inferreth, that he could not otherwiſe perform the Office of a good Shepherd; but that he thereby commiſſioned, not only St. *Peter* in Perſon, but all his Succeſſors in the See of *Rome*, to rule all Perſons and Nations, that in all Ages ſhall be of Chriſt's Flock, with as abſolute Power as a Shepherd doth his Sheep, and that all the Flock muſt obey him with the ſame tameneſs as the Sheep do their Shepherd: This can therefore be no matter, either of Faith or Reaſon, becauſe the Conſequence is beyond the ken of any Eye or Teleſcope.

3. Matter of Faith, properly ſo called, muſt not only be expreſly revealed, but *Expreſly honoured with the Promiſe of eternal Life to the Believer:* For though all God's Words be Equally (becauſe Infinitely) *True*; yet are not all equally *Goſpel*. That St. Paul *left his Cloak behind him*, and wrote to a Biſhop to bring it after him, we believe with as much Confidence, but not with as much Deference, as that *Chriſt died and roſe again*. Our Saviour preached many Moral Truths, which (yet) were not properly Matters of Chriſtian Faith, becauſe the World was acquainted with them before Chriſt appeared in it. We muſt therefore carefully diſtinguiſh between what is written, and what is Goſpel: and that to the Goſpel only, and not to any other Truth, was given the Promiſe, *Mark* 16. 15. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Goſpel to every Creature. He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damned.* It is to the Goſpel, and to the Goſpel alone, that this Saving and Damning Power is given by our Saviour; and therefore whoever aſcribeth it to any other Doctrin, however true, yea, however revealed, maketh himſelf Equal to Chriſt in Authority, and Superior in Faithfulneſs: Equal in Power, by Granting or Denying Salvation; and Superior in Faithfulneſs, by diſcovering ſome way to Salvation, and ſome Danger of Damnation, which our Lord left undiſcovered; and conſequently, leaving every ſincere Believer in danger to periſh without Fault. For then, whoever doubteth or Disbelieveth the Additionals, though he believe all that our Lord hath required, (which are no ſmall nor mean part of Chriſtians,) muſt periſh, not for ſtraying from the Faith, but for want of a Faithful Shepherd.

And here I cannot but repeat my former complaint, That in the midſt of ſuch hot Diſputes concerning the very Principles of our Religion, the moſt obvious and moſt important Remarks are neglected. In the Diſputes concerning *Juſtification by Faith*, we found St. *Paul* might be reconciled with St. *James* in that queſtion; in the ſame manner as with Himſelf, in the Promiſe he had made of every Man's eſcape, with the Warning he afterward gave of their Danger, if the Mariners went off; the one and the other equally accounted for, by a plain Rule, that *All Promiſes imply whatever is neceſſarily ſuppoſed.* And in the Matter now before us, we have another, and (if poſſible) a greater Blunder of the ſame kind. Nothing can be more *Obvious*, *Important*, or *Neglected*, than this (not Remark for our Reaſon, but) plain *Matter of Fact*; that there are *Some Truths offered to our Belief* by our Lord and his Apoſtles, *With a Promiſe annexed*, and others without any ſuch Promiſe; and from this undeniable and unavoidable Truth, theſe Corollaries will force themſelves upon us.

1. *There*

1. *There can be no need of an Interpreter of Scripture, or Determiner of Doubts concerning matters of Faith.* For if those words of Scripture, which inform us of what is *Necessary to be believed*, be so plain and so often repeated, that no Man can miss their true meaning; then every Man's own Faculties are so far Infallible, as to put him out of danger; and if any other Word of Scripture be doubtful, there is no harm if it remain so still; but if any, out of meer love to truth, sincerely labour to find it out in all its corners; his Endeavours will be accepted, and his Mistakes (if he fall into any) will be pardoned.

2. *The Scriptures cannot be denied to be Sufficient*, though they may have suffered the common Fate of all long-lived Books, by Carelesness of Copiers, Fraud of Hereticks, or Dust of Time.

Many of the Apostles Writings (doubtless) are lost; but that hindereth not the Sufficiency of those which we enjoy: yea, if all the rest of the Scripture were lost, but only those Texts which proclaim those Truths, to the Belief whereof eternal Life is promised; those few Texts would be sufficient. Nor doth this slacken our Obligation to Thankfulness for the rest; for as it is in Temporals, so it is in Spirituals; God's Bounty is not measured by our bare Necessities; he is *Rich towards us*, supplying us not only with Necessaries, but Conveniences; not only Bread of Life to keep us from Perishing, but many other Truths to feast our Curiosities, wherein (yet) as in corporal repasts, he requireth Sobriety.

3. *We need not, ought not to be uncharitable to any who differ from us in other Doctrins, to the Belief whereof the Promise is not appropriate*, especially if they agree with us in those, to which it is so. We are sure that they are *Heirs with us of the same Promise*; and if we hate them who love God, and are by him beloved, such Uncharitableness is both a greater Error and a greater Crime, than their Mistakes in doubtful things can be.

4. And which is now in our Eye, *There can be no need of a Catalogue of Fundamentals*, because the Scripture hath particularly enumerated what Truths are necessarily to be believed.

Did not our Eyes compel us to it, we should hardly think it possible, that any who had the least acquaintance with the *N.T.* could escape the discovery of so plain a Truth. When we therein find a Doctrin treated like *Mordecai*, with a Proclamation before it, *Bow the knee, Thus it shall be done to the truth which the Lord delighteth to honour*; and others left in the Street, among the vulgar Truths of Natural Religion; what reason can doubt, which of these are Saving Truths, and which Indifferent?

Should *Ahasuerus*'s Officers have set up or suffered *Any others*, much more should they have suffered *Many others*, to have rode in the same level cheek by jole with Him, had not this deprived both *Mordecai* of his Honour, and the King of his Obedience? and would not the Cavalcade have been so much the more Criminal, by how much it had been greater? How comes it then to pass, that those Truths which our Lord hath exalted above all others with the like singular Honour, should be levelled with others which are so far from any such Marks of his Favour, that he hath left them unregarded, and disputable, whether they be Truths or Errors?

I know no way to unriddle so strange a *Phænomenon*, but by that common saying, *Inter arma silent leges*. There hath been so much disputing about Questions, that we have not heeded things Unquestionable; though that would as certainly bring Peace to our Minds, as the Law would to

the State, if they might be paid their due.

Thoſe who are forbidden the uſe of their Bibles are excuſable; but thoſe who dare read them, muſt needs think themſelves obliged to *Search the Scriptures, for in them they think they have eternal Life, and they are they which teſtifie of the Doctrines* which are promiſed it.

The Task is every way very Eaſie; it will require very little Pains, and no Art. The meaneſt Beggar in the Street underſtood the King's mind concerning *Mordecai*; and ſo may any Man that will heed what are thoſe Truths which are honoured with a Proclamation of eternal Life; and beſides, we are more concerned to heed ſuch a Proclamation.

We have already obſerved, that the Apoſtle plainly told the Romans, *If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the Lord Jeſus, and believe with thy heart that God hath raiſed him from the Dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.* Do we in the whole New Teſtament find any other Doctrin ſo honoured? We again meet the ſame more pompouſly proclaimed, 1 *Cor.* 15. *I declare unto you the Goſpel which I preached unto you, which alſo you have received, and wherein you ſtand, by which alſo you are ſaved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, if you have not believed in vain.* Then cometh the ſame Truth, with ſomewhat of the ſame Pomp, *That Chriſt died for our ſins according to the Scriptures, and that he roſe again according to the Scriptures.*

It will be objected, That this cannot be the Faith which our Lord ſo importunely called for, becauſe this was not performed till after the time of his Preaching was paſt: Let us obſerve *Mark* 16. 14. *He appeared to the eleven as they ſate at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardneſs of Heart, becauſe they believed not them which had ſeen him after he was riſen: And he ſaid unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the Goſpel to every Creature, He that believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved, but he that believeth not ſhall be damned.* The Command coming in the ſame breath with the Reproof, plainly intimateth, that the *Goſpel* which they muſt preach, was the ſame which themſelves had been ſo backward in believing. However *Luke* 24. 46. both his Reſurrection and his Promiſe are made matter of Faith; *For he ſaid unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoveth Chriſt to ſuffer and to riſe again from the dead the third day, and that Repentance and Remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name among all Nations; and ye are witneſſes of theſe things.*

That the Apoſtles took the laſt of theſe words for the ſum of their Commiſſion, appeareth by what they ſaid and did after the death of *Judas*, Acts 1. 21. *Wherefore of theſe men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jeſus went in and out among us,——muſt one be ordained to be a witneſs with us of his Reſurrection.* And accordingly throughout the reſt of that Book, do we always find them inſiſt upon this, as the main of their buſineſs.

In the former half of theſe words doth our Lord argue it neceſſary, that his Death and Reſurrection ſhould be foretold and performed, that Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins might be preached in his name, *i. e.* as by him promiſed, and by his own Reſurrection ſecured; for the Remiſſion which the Prophets had promiſed, reached no further than Temporal Puniſhment; but that which Chriſt promiſed reached after Death to everlaſting Life.

This is plain by the Apoſtle's Diſcourſe abovementioned, which as he cloſeth with a Triumph over Death, *the ſting of death is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the Law, but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, ſo he buildeth the aſſurance of our own victory upon that of Chriſt; *If the dead riſe not, then is Chriſt not raiſed, and if Chriſt be raiſed, your*

Faith

Faith is vain, you are yet in your ſins. If the Conſequence be good one way, it is ſo the other: If the Being in our Sins follow from the denial of Chriſt's Reſurrection, then muſt Remiſſion of Sins import Reſurrection from Death. Both of them depend upon the Relation between Sin and Death. *The ſting of death is ſin*; and again, *the wages of ſin is Death*; and therefore a full and perfect Remiſſion of Sin, cannot but import a full and perfect Deliverance from Death.

So the Sum total of the Goſpel, which our Saviour himſelf preached in his Life-time, and commiſſioned his Apoſtles to preach after his Reſurrection, is this, That thoſe who believe in him, ſhall upon Repentance have ſuch a full Pardon of Sin, as to be delivered from Death; and that Chriſt who hath promiſed this, hath given us an Earneſt of it, by riſing himſelf from the Dead.

There is indeed an under-truth or ſo, which is preſſed upon our Belief as Neceſſary. For the Apoſtle telleth the *Galatians, If you be circumciſed Chriſt profiteth you nothing, you are fallen from Grace, you are debtors to the whole Law.* This I call an Under-truth, becauſe it implieth a Belief of Benefits promiſed by Chriſt, part whereof was a *New Covenant*, better than that of *Moſes*: This we heard promiſed by the Prophet, and inſiſted on by the Writer to the *Hebrews*, as the Character of the Goſpel; but was ſo far from being by our Lord honoured with a Promiſe of Eternal Life, that the Apoſtles themſelves doubted of it, till the Holy Ghoſt had decided it in Council.

Nor is this an Exception to our Rule, that it is beyond the Power of all the Men in the World, yea, or of all the Angels in Heaven, to make any thing an Article of Faith, which the Holy Scriptures have not made ſo, by annexing to them the Promiſe of Eternal Life, which therefore we now find to be it ſelf no leſs the *Matter* than the *Reward* of Faith.

CHAP. XI.

Of the manner of the Reſurrection, whether in the ſame Body or another.

THat a Reſurrection from the Dead is the proper Matter of the Chriſtian Faith, we have (I hope) ſufficiently proved: but concerning the Manner thereof, it doth not ſo plainly appear what we are to believe. The Apoſtle, in that ſolemn Diatribe, that he might leave nothing untouch'd, advanceth either a Queſtion or an Objection in the 35th Verſe; *But ſome man will ſay, how are the dead raiſed up, and with what body do they come?* If an Objection, it may be thus urg'd; the Dead are ſo buried, that it ſeems utterly impoſſible their Bodies ſhould be reſtored: Princes many times have their Bowels buried at great diſtance from their Limbs, ſome whole Nations burn their dead, many are drown'd in the Sea, where they are devoured by Fiſhes, thoſe Fiſhes again by others, which perhaps come to the Market and feed other Men; and by many other ways are the Particles ſo diſpers'd, that it ſeems utterly impoſſible to retrieve them.

If this be objected againſt the Truth of Reſurrection, the roughneſs of the Apoſtle's Anſwer will be juſt; they are Fools in doubting God's Omnipotency: all theſe or whatever other Changes any man's Body may undergo, are not greater than the Chymiſt makes in his Mercury, which yet again he eaſily recalls to his form. He

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that made all things of nothing, can by the ſame powerful Word command every Particle to its proper Body; nor is he leſs a Fool who doubts whether God will do this if he have promiſed it; becauſe it is poſſible for God to perform ſuch a Promiſe, but it is not poſſible he ſhould break it. But if the Queſtion be, Whether God has promis'd this, ſo that we do not doubt either his Power or his Veracity, but only our own apprehenſion of the meaning of his Word; this doth not impeach any of God's perfections, but only our own underſtanding: it cannot be Injuſtice againſt God, whom in the midſt of ſuch doubts we undoubtingly believe to be infinitely true: but it is juſtice to our own underſtandings, which we do not only believe, but know to be fallible. If therefore we find the ſame Words vulgarly uſed in another Senſe, more agreeable to plain Reaſon and God's Perfections; then may we eaſily enquire, firſt, *Whether any promiſe of God does neceſſarily import a reſtitution of the ſame numerical matter?* if not, then may we proceed to enquire, ſecondly, *Whether it be honourable to God, and more ſerviceable to the Deſigns of the Goſpel, that we believe the contrary?*

First, *Whether the Word of Promiſe neceſſarily imports a Reſtitution of the ſame numerical matter?* This is fully and clearly anſwered, as ſoon as in common ſpeaking we find the ſame Words uſed in a leſs rigid ſenſe: but if we obſerve how the Apoſtle himſelf hath anſwered this very Queſtion, the leaſt that we thence learn is this, That ſuch a meaning is not matter of Faith, ſince he hath left it doubtful, and the contrary more probable: for thus he anſwers, *Thou Fool, thou ſoweſt not the body that ſhall be, but God giveth it a body as it pleaſeth him, and to every ſeed its own body.* Does not this plainly deny a Reſurrection of the ſame numerical Particles? Thou ſoweſt a little ſingle Grain, which when it is corrupted, riſeth in Root, Stalk, Blade, Ears, and Grains, thouſands of times more in matter than was ſowen; God giving the body, and yet to every Seed its own. What conſequence can thence be clearer than this, That every one may at the Reſurrection receive his own Body, tho' it be not the ſame that was buried?

And we may yet farther conſider, that this is the conſtant way of Nature in all living Bodies, which we reckon the ſame while they keep the ſame Forms, tho' they change every Particle of Matter: Grant therefore, that thoſe Words of *Job*, *Tho' worms conſume this fleſh, yet with theſe eyes ſhall I ſee God*, expreſs his confidence of a Reſurrection; yet will they ſignifie no more than this, That tho' perſpiration conſume every atom of my Fleſh, yet ſhall my Eyes be as much the ſame, and ſee as well, as if there were no change in them; and if there be no more required from other Topicks than from the Letter of the Promiſe, we are at liberty to believe what ſhall ſeem moſt probable. The uſual Arguments are two; firſt, from God's Juſtice, and ſecondly, from the Serviceableneſs of the Belief.

First, it is argued, *That it is juſt that the ſame Body which was ſharer in the Sin or the Service, ſhould alſo be ſharer in the Puniſhment or Reward.* But if we will ſpeak properly, the Body hath no ſhare either in the one or the other; for Matter neither acteth nor perceiveth, but the Soul by the matter. 2 *Cor.* 5. the Apoſtle likens our Body to an Houſe, and to Cloaths; the Man dwells in the one, and moves in the other, yet neither the one nor the other ſhares Life with him; and therefore to argue, that it muſt be the ſame Body that ſhall receive Puniſhment at the Reſurrection, is the ſame as to ſay, the Malefactor muſt be Executed in the ſame Cloaths wherein

wherein he committed the Crime.

So many years past between the Injuries which *Joseph* received from his Brethren, and the Honors which he received from *Pharaoh*, and thereby his whole body was so changed, that his Brethren knew him not; and there were yet greater Changes both in His and Their Bodies, before their Father's Death; yet were not their Consciences changed, but in their Old Age they feared his Revenge for the Cruelties of their Youth: and if humane Justice punish an old Crime, tho' between the Act and the Discovery every Particle of the Body be chang'd, because the same Soul makes him the same Person; how can we doubt but Divine Justice may at the Resurrection do the same?

Secondly, *Whether it be more honourable to God to believe the one or the other*, is the same as to ask, Whether it be more honorable to salve all his Perfections, or to rob one that we may cloath the other? If we so believe, as to magnifie God's Veracity in performance of his Promise, and his Justice in distributing Rewards and Punishments; will it not more justifie his Wisdom, to believe that he will act suitably to that order of Things which himself hath established, than that he will unaccountably exercise his Omnipotency? It is not (we confess) it is not for silly Men to prescribe Rules for God's Wisdom in its particular acts: but we must have a clear and distinct Definition of the Nature of Wisdom in general, otherwise we pay him but an empty Word when we ascribe that Perfection to him, and we might as much honor him by saying he is Unwise. Now, that Definition whereby we understand Wisdom, importeth a choice first of a good End, and then of suitable Means: if therefore the means be unsuitable, either in Kind or Proportion, that will make a defect in Wisdom. Should we see a Man yoke a whole Plough of Oxen, to draw a weight which a Child could carry in one of his hands, we should certainly think him better furnished with Cattel than Understanding: and to believe that God will by his Omnipotency work as many Miracles as he shall raise Bodies, when all his Promises may be as well verified, and all his good Ends as well promoted in a way less miraculous, must be no less a Diminution of his Wisdom than Exaltation of his Power, since all that exercise of Power which tends to no good purpose, is vain and impertinent.

Let us then consider to what purpose is the Resurrection promis'd, and our Belief of it requir'd? The Apostle hath proclaim'd two especially, first, *That our joy might be full*; and secondly, that we may *partake God's Nature*.

1. The Resurrection is therefore promised *that our joy may be full:* and if we consider the Strength of Wishes, and the Faintness of Hopes, which Mankind without Christ laboured under; we may thence compute how great a joy the Promise may bring to a longing mind. The Words of *Seneca*, in his 102 *Epist.* gives us a good Hypotyposis of it: *I took pleasure to debate upon the Eternity of Souls, nay more, I was fully resolved therein; for I easily believed the Opinions of great Men rather promising than proving so great a matter. I gave my self over to this so great hope, and now grow hateful to my self; and now contemn the Reliques of my broken Years, being ready to be transferred into that immeasurable time and possession of that infinite Eternity, when as suddenly I was awakened by the Letter, which made me dismiss so sweet a Dream, which hereafter I will revive and redeem again as soon as I shall have satisfied thy expectation.* Such were the feeble Flutterings of the best humane Wisdom, wanting the Gospel.

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that made all things of nothing, can by the ſame powerful Word command every Particle to its proper Body; nor is he leſs a Fool who doubts whether God will do this if he have promiſed it; becauſe it is poſſible for God to perform ſuch a Promiſe, but it is not poſſible he ſhould break it. But if the Queſtion be, Whether God has promis'd this, ſo that we do not doubt either his Power or his Veracity, but only our own apprehenſion of the meaning of his Word; this doth not impeach any of God's perfections, but only our own underſtanding: it cannot be Injuſtice againſt God, whom in the midſt of ſuch doubts we undoubtingly believe to be infinitely true: but it is juſtice to our own underſtandings, which we do not only believe, but know to be fallible. If therefore we find the ſame Words vulgarly uſed in another Senſe, more agreeable to plain Reaſon and God's Perfections; then may we eaſily enquire, firſt, *Whether any promiſe of God does neceſſarily import a reſtitution of the ſame numerical matter?* if not, then may we proceed to enquire, ſecondly, *Whether it be honourable to God, and more ſerviceable to the Deſigns of the Goſpel, that we believe the contrary?*

Firſt, *Whether the Word of Promiſe neceſſarily imports a Reſtitution of the ſame numerical matter?* This is fully and clearly anſwered, as ſoon as in common ſpeaking we find the ſame Words uſed in a leſs rigid ſenſe: but if we obſerve how the Apoſtle himſelf hath anſwered this very Queſtion, the leaſt that we thence learn is this, That ſuch a meaning is not matter of Faith, ſince he hath left it doubtful, and the contrary more probable: for thus he anſwers, *Thou Fool, thou ſoweſt not the body that ſhall be, but God giveth it a body as it pleaſeth him, and to every ſeed its own body.* Does not this plainly deny a Reſurrection of the ſame numerical Particles? Thou ſoweſt a little ſingle Grain, which when it is corrupted, riſeth in Root, Stalk, Blade, Ears, and Grains, thouſands of times more in matter than was ſowen; God giving the body, and yet to every Seed its own. What conſequence can thence be clearer than this, That every one may at the Reſurrection receive his own Body, tho' it be not the ſame that was buried?

And we may yet farther conſider, that this is the conſtant way of Nature in all living Bodies, which we reckon the ſame while they keep the ſame Forms, tho' they change every Particle of Matter: Grant therefore, that thoſe Words of *Job*, *Tho' worms conſume this fleſh, yet with theſe eyes ſhall I ſee God*, expreſs his confidence of a Reſurrection; yet will they ſignifie no more than this, That tho' perſpiration conſume every atom of my Fleſh, yet ſhall my Eyes be as much the ſame, and ſee as well, as if there were no change in them; and if there be no more required from other Topicks than from the Letter of the Promiſe, we are at liberty to believe what ſhall ſeem moſt probable. The uſual Arguments are two; firſt, from God's Juſtice, and ſecondly, from the Serviceableneſs of the Belief.

Firſt, it is argued, *That it is juſt that the ſame Body which was ſharer in the Sin or the Service, ſhould alſo be ſharer in the Puniſhment or Reward.* But if we will ſpeak properly, the Body hath no ſhare either in the one, or the other; for Matter neither acteth nor perceiveth, but the Soul by the matter. 2 *Cor.* 5. the Apoſtle likens our Body to an Houſe, and to Cloaths; the Man dwells in the one, and moves in the other, yet neither the one nor the other ſhares Life with him; and therefore to argue, that it muſt be the ſame Body that ſhall receive Puniſhment at the Reſurrection, is the ſame as to ſay, the Malefactor muſt be Executed in the ſame Cloaths wherein

wherein he committed the Crime.

So many years past between the Injuries which *Joseph* received from his Brethren, and the Honors which he received from *Pharaoh*, and thereby his whole body was so changed, that his Brethren knew him not; and there were yet greater Changes both in His and Their Bodies, before their Father's Death; yet were not their Consciences changed, but in their Old Age they feared his Revenge for the Cruelties of their Youth: and if humane Justice punish an old Crime, tho' between the Act and the Discovery every Particle of the Body be chang'd, because the same Soul makes him the same Person; how can we doubt but Divine Justice may at the Resurrection do the same?

Secondly, *Whether it be more honourable to God to believe the one or the other*, is the same as to ask, Whether it be more honorable to salve all his Perfections, or to rob one that we may cloath the other? If we so believe, as to magnifie God's Veracity in performance of his Promise, and his Justice in distributing Rewards and Punishments; will it not more justifie his Wisdom, to believe that he will act suitably to that order of Things which himself hath established, than that he will unaccountably exercise his Omnipotency? It is not (we confess) it is not for silly Men to prescribe Rules for God's Wisdom in its particular acts: but we must have a clear and distinct Definition of the Nature of Wisdom in general, otherwise we pay him but an empty Word when we ascribe that Perfection to him, and we might as much honor him by saying he is Unwise. Now, that Definition whereby we understand Wisdom, importeth a choice first of a good End, and then of suitable Means: if therefore the means be unsuitable, either in Kind or Proportion, that will make a defect in Wisdom. Should we see a Man yoke a whole Plough of Oxen, to draw a weight which a Child could carry in one of his hands, we should certainly think him better furnished with Cattel than Understanding: and to believe that God will by his Omnipotency work as many Miracles as he shall raise Bodies, when all his Promises may be as well verified, and all his good Ends as well promoted in a way less miraculous, must be no less a Diminution of his Wisdom than Exaltation of his Power, since all that exercise of Power which tends to no good purpose, is vain and impertinent.

Let us then consider to what purpose is the Resurrection promis'd, and our Belief of it requir'd? The Apostle hath proclaim'd two especially, first, *That our joy might be full*; and secondly, that we may *partake God's Nature*.

1. The Resurrection is therefore promised *that our joy may be full:* and if we consider the Strength of Wishes, and the Faintness of Hopes, which Mankind without Christ laboured under; we may thence compute how great a joy the Promise may bring to a longing mind. The Words of *Seneca*, in his 102 *Epist.* gives us a good Hypotyposis of it: *I took pleasure to debate upon the Eternity of Souls, nay more, I was fully resolved therein; for I easily believed the Opinions of great Men rather promising than proving so great a matter. I gave my self over to this so great hope, and now grow hateful to my self; and now contemn the Reliques of my broken Years, being ready to be transferred into that immeasurable time and possession of that infinite Eternity, when as suddenly I was awakened by the Letter, which made me dismiss so sweet a Dream, which hereafter I will revive and redeem again as soon as I shall have satisfied by expectation.* Such were the feeble Flutterings of the best humane Wisdom, wanting the Gospel.

The

The ſtrength of their Wiſhes raiſed them a little towards Hope; but wanting ſupport, quickly fell back again to Fear; ſo their Joy was no better than Suſpence, none of the eaſieſt poſtures.

In two reſpects eſpecially was their Joy defective; 1. *Want of Confidence to the Perſons from whom they received the Promiſes*; and 2. *Scantneſs of the Happineſs promiſed.*

1. They had no confident *Belief in the Perſons*, whom the Philoſopher calleth indeed *Great Men*, but complaineth that they *proved* not what they *promiſed*. They were Great, not by Nature or Commiſſion, but by Study; had no better Warrant for their promiſes, than what were dictated by partiality to their own Wiſhes, not the leaſt pretence of Power to make them good. But the Author of the Goſpel is a Perſon not only Great, but Infinite; and no leſs ſo in Power, than Faithfulneſs; ſo that there is no place for the leaſt diſtruſt.

2. Another, (and to the preſent purpoſe more conſiderable,) defect of human hopes was in the *Scantneſs of expected happineſs*; it was Immortality indeed, but a Carnal one. They pretend to anſwer *Job*'s complaint, by equalling a dead man's hopes to thoſe of a Tree, which ſprings again when it is cut down; but they had no thoughts of ſuch a Harveſt as the Apoſtle promiſeth. And that the hopes of the Phariſees were no better than thoſe of the Philoſophers, ſeemeth plain from that objection, wherewith the Sadduces pretended to gravel our Saviour: For it cannot be reaſonably imagined, but amidſt ſo long Converſation, and ſo many Diſputes, as had ſawed that queſtion between them; the Phariſees muſt needs have better informed them, if themſelves had underſtood the difference between the Preſent Life and the Future.

And now that our Lord hath ſo plainly revealed that we ſhall be ἰσάγγελοι, *equal to the Angels*, that his Apoſtle hath no leſs plainly declared, that our Lord will *change our vile Bodies, that they may be like his own Glorious Body*, that the Reſurrection ſhall make great and glorious variety of Changes, from Natural, to Spiritual, from Weak, to Powerful, from Corruptible, to Incorruptible, *&c.* That we ſhould ſtill be ſo fond of our load of Carrion, as to think it a diminution of our happineſs, if we be not again yoaked to the ſame dead matter; ſeemeth no leſs a contradiction to the deſires of Nature, than to the Promiſes of Scripture. This (ſay ſome) will be the joy of the Reſurrection, that the two old Friends meet and embrace each other. But a little conſideration will anſwer, that ſuch a meeting would not be of old Friends but of old Enemies. How can we read the 7*th* Chapter to the *Romans*, and find there deſcribed the *War between the Fleſh and the Spirit?* How can we hear that ſad cry, *Oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this Body of Death!* yet think it matter of joy to be remanded to it again? Do we not find him often exhorting to *mortifie our members which are upon the earth*, and doth he not propoſe himſelf for example, *beating down his body and keeping it in ſubjection, leſt he ſhould be caſt away?* Or is the Apoſtle ſingular in this notion? doth not Natural Religion agree with the Chriſtian, and Experience with both, that Virtue is nothing elſe but a War againſt the Body in behalf of the Mind?

Either the Soul ſhall at the Reſurrection have a remembrance of her late dead Body, and the old converſation ſhe had with it or ſhe ſhall not: If ſhe ſhall not, then there can be no more joy if ſhe meet the ſame Old Fleſh, than if all be New: But if ſhe do remember her old Mate, and her old Converſation with it; then muſt ſhe remember all the Contentions ſhe had with it,

it, all the Wounds ſhe received from it, all the Dangers which ſhe hardly eſcaped by watching againſt it; and it ſeemeth very ſtrange, that the Soul at the Reſurrection ſhould find much matter of Joy in that Fleſh, as its greateſt Friend, which did its moſt, and had not God's Goodneſs aſſiſted, would have prevailed, to make Reſurrection it ſelf infinitely miſerable.

However, by our Preſent Thoughts let us judge of our Future. Were it put to our choice, whether we would continue in the ſame Fleſh, however exalted in accidents; or tranſlated into another, which would not have the leaſt Particle the ſame, but ſuch Properties as ſhould equal us with Angels; ſhould we ſo regard our Dead Senſeleſs Matter, as to make the leaſt difficulty of ſhifting it? Should we have ſuch ſtupid fondneſs for our courſe naſty Rags, as in love to them to refuſe Robes of Glory? Our Matter feels no more than do our Cloaths; and our Souls in ſuch exchange, can feel nothing but exceſs of Joy in her new Robes: So that from this Topick will ſpring no neceſſity, that we ſhould believe what we cannot rejoyce in.

II. Another great deſign of the Goſpel, or rather the ſame in another Dreſs, is this, That we may *have fellowſhip with God*; which St. *Peter* more plainly paraphraſeth, ſaying, *For this reaſon are given to us great and precious Promiſes, that by them we may be made partakers of the Divine Nature.* Since therefore all the force which the Promiſes have towards effecting this good end, is derived from the Joy which ſhall reward them who are invited by ſuch Promiſes to ſuch Godlineſs: If we believe the Promiſes in ſuch a ſenſe as maketh them moſt Deſireable; we thereby exerciſe ſuch a Faith, as is moſt Serviceable to that Adequate End, for which the Promiſes are Given, and Faith required.

And the difference in this reſpect is ſo ſmall between the two Opinions, that no conſidering Perſon will abate his diligence in God's Service, if he believe he ſhall be bleſſed with a Body ſo Glorious, ſo Vigorous, ſo every way better than this, that he cannot have the leaſt wiſh it ſhould be the ſame.

In ſhort therefore, this is not matter of Faith, but Curioſity. That we believe, that the faithful ſhall have a Reſurrection to happineſs greater than they can ask or think; This is therefore matter of Faith, becauſe our Lord himſelf hath made it ſo, declared it to be the very reaſon of his coming into the World, and commanded his Apoſtles to preach it as his Goſpel. This if we ſo believe, as thence to proceed to the Apoſtles moſt Rational and Godly Inference, to be *ſtedfaſt and immoveable, alway abounding in the Work of the Lord, for as much as our labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord*; we have then both *Matter* and *Soul of Faith*, and may ſecurely rely on God's faithfulneſs to perform his promiſe in the beſt manner.

AND now we have very Amply, and perhaps very Tediouſly, diſſected That half of the Goſpel, which filleth whole Libraries with Books of impertinent Subtilties. Whatever is diſputed concerning any Point of Religion (falſly ſo called) pretendeth to convince us of what we ought to believe in That Particular. But one or two General Aphoriſms diſcovering Why and How far Belief it ſelf is required, will ſilence all thoſe endleſs (every way endleſs) Diſputes. This ſo beneficial and neglected Work, we have endeavoured to perform

by diſſecting the whole Myſtery of the Goſpel.

That its buſineſs was to reduce the Jews from their Bondage under the Law of *Moſes*, and the Gentiles from their worſe Bondage under the Worſhip of Devils, to the Service of God, by the free Directions of their own Nature: That to this end, he *ſent his only begotten Son into the World*; teaching them, That the beſt Service of God conſiſteth in being like him; and for their encouragement therein, promiſing them, upon Repentance, Pardon of Sins paſt, and Everlaſting Life. And becauſe thoſe Promiſes could no otherwiſe be effectual, Faith muſt neceſſarily be called for, with importunity ſuitable both to the Difficulties and Dangers which at that time encompaſſed it, and to the Serviceableneſs which at all Times accompanieth it.

This is the Sum of the Goſpel: a Chain of Benefits let down from Heaven, worthy of God to beſtow, of Angels to admire, and of Man to rejoyce in. In this Chain, the only Link which man can reach, is Faith, and its whole worth conſiſts in its connexion with the reſt, and its eaſineſs to be laid hold on.

And ſince it is incongruous that the Means ſhould be more difficult than the End; it cannot be, that Faith ſhould be more above the reach of an honeſt mind, than the Holineſs which it is to ſerve.

No; it was firſt preached to the Poor, and where-ever it came, was firſt and beſt entertained by Such; its own Learned Apoſtle renounced the *words which Mans Wiſdom teacheth*, and fell into jealouſie, leſt his Diſciples *minds ſhould be corrupted* with *knowledge, falſly ſo called*; and whether he had reaſon, will appear by our next Enquiry.

ENQUIRY II.

What Changes or Additions later Ages have made in Matter of Faith?

THis we propoſed as a *ſecond* Enquiry: but it is not ſo properly an ENQUIRY, as a Muſter; They are ſo Numerous and ſo Obvious, ſtand ſo thick in our way, and ſo juſtle us on every ſide, that it will not be difficult to find them, but to range them into Order.

The *General* Change, which leadeth all the reſt, is the change of its *Place*. It is unlinked from the *Chain* wherein it is ineſtimably ſerviceable; and treated in its *ſingle* ſeparate Nature, as if it were ſome precious Diamond, valuable for Brightneſs, Hardneſs, or other irreſpective Virtue of its own.

We find our Lord honour it, as the great King did *Daniel* above all his Princes: We hear him declare, That himſelf came into the World to advance it therein: We hear him promiſe it Eternal Life: We hear both Him and his Apoſtle make it half the Goſpel: We meet it in every Page of the New Teſtament; and upon ſight of its ſo great Glory, we talk as St. *Peter* did, when confounded at the Brightneſs of our Lord's Raiment and Countenance, *he knew not what he ſaid*.

We conſider not, that two of the Reaſons which induced our Lord to call ſo importunately for it, are by his good providence

providence not only expired, but turned to the contrary point, and its now adequate worth is its Serviceableneſs. It may boaſt as did the Vine in *Jotham*'s Parable, of *chearing of God and man*, but it is by its Wine, not by its Timber. By This, it can neither ſupport its only feeble Limbs, nor furniſh a Pin whereby to faſten them to the Wall, where they are not worthy to hang but for the Fruits ſake.

Should our Lord require more of it than is ſerviceable, then muſt he require the Overplus without reaſon; and this would ſpeak him not a Good and Wiſe, but Humerſom and Capricious Lord; ſo by the ſame proportion as we exalt the Dignity of Faith above its Uſefulneſs, we muſt depreſs the Honour of our Saviour.

This therefore is the Mother-error, that whereas Faith is no better than a Retainer to Holineſs, we place it in the Throne as an Independent abſolute Prince. This I ſay is the Mother-error, and is parent of two others: For we think it our Duty to ſuch a Prince, to make it as great as poſſible: 1. By *enlarging its Dominion as far*. And 2. by *exalting its Prerogative as high* as we can; and ſo we overdo Truth in both.

I. *We extend the Empire of Faith as far as poſſible*; not only beyond its proper bounds, but beyond all bounds whatſoever. *Braſidas*, when asked how far the Territories of *Sparta* reached? Anſwered, as far as I can caſt my Lance. And a Romaniſt, if asked, how far Matters of Faith is extended? Will anſwer, as far as the Pope ſhall declare any thing to be *de fide*. And that this may reach far and wide enough, the School-men have employed their Inventions, to make Diſcoveries of ſuch Queſtions, and entangled them with ſuch Objections, as may ſeem worthy and neceſſary to be defined. By this Art have we gotten a vaſt Army of new Doctrines of Faith; and the Goſpel, of whoſe Simplicity the greateſt of the Apoſtles gloried, is become a Science of all others moſt perplexed. Our Modern Theology hath ſo much more of Metaphyſicks than of the Goſpel, that in defiance to St. *Paul*, who boaſted that the Light of the Goſpel was ſo bright, as not to be hid to any, but ſuch as had their Eyes blinded by the God of this World; we may ſay of it as *Ariſtotle* did of the Science into which it is moulded, *it is ſo publiſhed, as not to be publiſhed*, ſince there is hardly a word in it, whoſe full meaning is throughly underſtood.

Where the beſt Eye can diſcover nothing but limpid Liquor, the Microſcope findeth a multitude of little Animals; and where a plain underſtanding apprehendeth a clear truth, there a diſputatious School-man findeth a multitude of little Doctrines, as uſeleſs as thoſe Animals. The unhappy difference is, that the Microſcope pretendeth no more but to ſpring Game for our curioſity; but the Schools impoſe their Dictates upon our Faith, not only as worthy to be known, but neceſſary to be believed.

It is not ſufficient for the Biſhop of *Rome* to ſet up for an Oracle; he pretendeth not only to declare what is True, but to change the very Nature of Truth, by making That matter of Faith, which before was only matter of Curioſity; and thereby under the Title of Vicar of Chriſt, claimeth a Power to deſtroy the Souls for whoſe Salvation Chriſt died. For whenever a new matter is made *de fide*, it is thereby made deſtructive to as many as cannot conform their Belief to the Pope's Judg-

ment. Had it not been disputed, it had not had any need to be so defined; and those who before opposed it upon what they took for good reason, cannot now find that reason the weaker; so the fruit of the Decision is only this, that the belief which before was Innocent, is now become Damnable.

They seem indeed to make ample amends, by the implicit Faith which they say will avail for the common People, to whom it shall be sufficient to believe as the Church believeth, tho they neither understand, nor so much as hear of any Article of Faith, which by this Salvo, are so far from being multiplied, that they are annihilated.

But 1. *Where are we commanded to believe thus implicitly in the Church?* And 2. *What is such a Faith good for?*

1. *Where doth our Lord require this implicit Faith in the Church?* He said, (indeed) as he had reason, *Ye believe in God, believe also in Me:* But where did he say, Ye believe in Me, believe also in my Church? And,

2. *To what purpose should he so command?* How is any Man inspirited to Holiness, by believing he knoweth not what? What Fear or Love of God can be kindled, what Comfort or Joy advanced, what motive to Godliness actuated, by such an *uncertain sound?* Yea, further, why must the Church in General, believe more than every Member in Particular?

We dispute not about words, and therefore grant the Church to be the Pastors; but still we ask, Why is it necessary even for Them, to believe more than our Lord himself required? If such a belief be worth a Command, shew us wherein that worth consisteth, and you will at the same shew our Lord to be defective in omitting such a Command: But if it have in it nothing worth commanding, then those who impose it, do at once invade our Lord's Legislative Power, and defeat his gracious Purpose, of saving all that believe what himself required to be believed.

If there be any thing yet more intolerable, This perhaps may be so, That those who deny the Pope this imposing Power, assume it to themselves. *Heterodoxy* with them signifies no less danger, than doth *Heresy* with the Papists. They that want either Courage or Care to examine what they are taught, deny it to others; and as they believe without Reason, so do they without Measure.

If such a Man light upon truth in every little Question, he must be very happy, since they are contested with equal Confidence on either side, mutually condemning each other as *Heterodox*, when indeed both sides are so; for the word properly signifieth such as hold other Opinions than the Word of God hath revealed, and such cannot be matter of dispute.

II. They who thus extend the Dominions, do also *exalt the Prerogative of Faith.* Above 1. *Measure.* 2. *Holiness.* 3. *Charity.* And 4. *Reason.*

1. *Those whose extend its Dominions beyond its due limits, do also exalt its Power above measure.* I say, *those who extend its Dominions beyond its due limits.* For within them we readily acknowledg its Power Absolute, and all Obedience due to it without reserve.

But the proper Dominions of Faith exceed not this one Proposition, that *God cannot lye.* This is the Great Commandment of the *Gospel*, and answereth the great one of the *Law*; as that saith, thou shalt

ſhalt *Love*, ſo this faith, thou ſhalt *Believe the Lord thy God with all thy Soul, and with all thy Might:* This, as it is a Truth of infinite Certainty, ſo muſt it have infinite Power upon our Belief, as we found it to have upon *Abraham's*, in defiance of all Oppoſitions that might have been made by Reaſon or Nature.

But there are other Truths, and thoſe (perhaps) vertually included in this great One; the Belief whereof muſt be meaſured by the Intereſt they may have in the proper Vertue of Faith, which we have found to be twofold. 1. *Juſtice to God's Veracity.* 2. *Serviceableneſs to Piety.*

1. Some Doctrines are the immediate Apparent Iſſue of that great Truth, ſo plainly publiſhed in the Word of God, that he that runneth may read them: Others require cloſe Application, a good Eye, and perhaps, good Art too: Muſt all theſe Doctrines, ſo unequal in their Evidence, be received with equal, and that Supream Confidence?

If my confidence of the Truth of the Doctrine, equal my Evidence that it is God's Word, I make full payment of what is due to God's Veracity: But if I doubt whether that which you tell me is God's Word, be ſo indeed; this may be ſome defect of Juſtice to your Veracity, but it can be none to God's: Convince me that God hath ſaid it, and my Confidence of the Truth ſhall equal that Conviction; till then, neither is God's Veracity, nor my Faith concerned.

2. Another Worth of Faith is derived from its Serviceableneſs to that great and good End, for whoſe ſake the Promiſes are given us. And are thoſe Doctrines which are impoſed upon our Belief as *de fide*, are they all equally, all ſupremely Serviceable to Holineſs? Are not ſome more, ſome leſs, and moſt of them not at all ſo? And ſhall a Confidence equally fruitleſs, groundleſs, and boundleſs, be accepted for my Juſtification, beyond a leſs Confident, but more Fruitful Belief, yea or doubt of a Propoſition, of which I have no better reaſon to believe that it cometh from God, but this, that you tell me ſo?

In a word, If for this End the Promiſes be given us, *That by them we may be made Partakers of the Divine Nature*, (as St. *Peter* expreſly affirms), then he that receiveth them, and (which is more) he that receiveth any other Truths, with ſuch an Effectual Faith, as ſhall transform him thereinto, receiveth them with Confidence enough.

II. Some exalt Faith *Above* Holineſs, yea, and *Againſt* it too. Not only the thorough-pac'd Antinomians and Solifidians, but many others, who call themſelves Orthodox, finding no intrinſick Work, proportionable to the great Price at which they find Faith valued; Wilfully or Haſtily over-looking its relation to Holineſs, borrow it a value from its relation to the Perſon of Chriſt, which no man doubteth to be infinitely valuable. *Faith* (ſay they) *is the Hand whereby we apply Chriſt to our ſelves; and by this Application, Chriſt is made Ours, and His Righteouſneſs imputed to Us, as if it were our Own; and it juſtifieth not by his Own Worthineſs, but by the Merit of Chriſt, which it layeth hold on, and applieth*: And by this pretty Conceit, any degree of real inherent Righteouſneſs is rendred not only Inſufficient, but Dangerous; there is no more hope of the Lewdeſt Rake-hell, than of a moral Man; the Preaching of the Church-of-*England*-men is deſpiſed, becauſe they Preach not Jeſus Chriſt, nor Faith in Him, but moral Stuff, *&c.*

If Holineſs of Life have any place among ſuch Doctrines, Thanks muſt be paid

paid to God's over-ruling Grace, and the deep Impreſſions of Natural Religion, not to be defaced by any oppoſite Notions: For if Chriſt's Righteouſneſs be imputed to me as if it were mine own, what need I labour for any other? Will not all ſuch Labour be worſe than loſt? Will it not caſt diſhonour upon Chriſt's Righteouſneſs, as inſufficient, and upon his Precepts, as Needleſs? Need I, can I be more Righteous than Chriſt?

And where (in the Name of Chriſt) where do we in all the Book of God, or in Reaſon, meet any intimation of this fine Doctrine? *Application of Chriſt to our ſelves, the Hand of Faith, imputed Righteouſneſs*, &c. What are they but terms of Art, invented by falſe Apoſtles? We read indeed, that *Abraham's Faith was imputed to him for Righteouſneſs*; and ſo ſhall it be imputed to Us, if we believe as He did: But ſtill it was *Abraham*'s Own proper Faith, and not Anothers; and that Faith was no leſs Obedient than Confident. But what is that to Chriſt's Righteouſneſs imputed to us, and that only by Virtue of laying hold upon him by an Application inverted? not by applying our ſelves to Chriſt, conforming our ſelves to his Precepts and Example; but applying Him to our Selves, by meer forceable laying hands upon him?

A certain Land was miſerably waſted by a raging Plague: A great Phyſician, in compaſſion to the People, came among them, declared that he had a *Noſtrum* which never failed them that truſted it, that it had been to himſelf very coſtly, but he would freely communicate it to all that needed and deſired it, and therefore exhorted every one to come to him for it. Many did ſo, and were infallibly cured; but others ſaid, There needed no more, but to truſt to the Medicine, the Phyſician was infinitely skilful in his Art, and faithful in his Promiſes; that therefore by confidence in him they ſhould have all his Health imputed to them, and that ſhould cure them as perfectly as if they received real Health by uſe of his Preſcriptions. This is the very Caſe now upon the Carpet: For look how much the Sick Patient is cured by the imputed Health of the Phyſician, without a real remove of the Diſeaſe; juſt ſo much is ſuch a Believer juſtified by the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt imputed to him upon his confident applying of Chriſt to himſelf, with aſſurance of his being one of the Elect, without applying himſelf to Chriſt, by conforming to his Nature and Commands.

Let us then, for Chriſt's ſake, let us apply our ſelves to him with all Aſſurance of his Power and Deſire to ſave us; and let this Confidence deliver us up to an abſolute ſubmiſſion to his Conduct: But let us beware of truſting to his imputed Righteouſneſs, without real Holineſs; leaſt we obtain only imputed Salvation, and fall into real Condemnation. And on the other ſide, let us beware alſo, that we rob him not of our due acknowledgments; for what the Apoſtle ſaith of Faith in abſtract, is no leſs true of it in Conjunction with Holineſs. *By Faith working by Love, we are ſaved, and that, not of our Selves, it is the Gift of God.*

III. It is exalted above and againſt Charity, which it is its Duty and Honour to ſerve. We have found one of the great Ends of the Goſpel to be the advancement of the Divine Life, whereof Charity is ſo great a part (if we may call it a part) that however great and many Things are ſpoken of *Faith*, greater are ſpoken of *Love*. The Apoſtle is expreſs in giving this the precedence. *And now abideth Faith, Hope, and Charity, theſe three, but the greateſt of theſe is*

is Charity. More yet, he plainly declareth, that Faith dependeth on it for its ſaving power, *In Chriſt Jeſus nothing availeth but Faith working by Love.* And that this Work may reach not our Lord only, but our Brother too, he exhorteth the *Epheſians* to it by This Argument, *There is one Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm:* But Experience too plainly proveth, That whatever force *Unity of Faith* may have for *Unity of Spirit in the bond of peace*; the ſame hath multiplication of Articles of Faith, for dividing of minds by Schiſms and Feuds. For while the Chriſtian World had but *one Faith*, their mutual Love was the wonder and envy of their Enemies: but from the time that it received Additionals, and every new Doctrine became a new Religion, the mutual hatred of ſeveral Sects hath been no leſs wonderful.

For ſo much greater regard hath every one for his particular Belief (which he calleth his Religion) than for that General Faith wherein All agree; that his Neighbour's Diſſent therein, weigheth more againſt Charity, than his Agreement in the greateſt Truths can do for it.

The Good Emperors Argument was no leſs Unproſperous and Pious, whereby he endeavoured to cool the heat of the Contending Parties, in the firſt and moſt uncharitable Diſpute that ever rent the Chriſtian World: *Philoſophers*, ſaid he, *though in many things they differ, yet while they agree in the main, do not hate one another for their differences in few things, but love one another for their Agreement in the reſt; and why ſhould not We do ſo, who profeſs a more loving Religion?* If we ſeek the ſolution of this Riddle only from the nature of Faith, or from Scripture, or Reaſon, we ſhall never get ſatisfaction; but as ſoon as we caſt our eye upon the Intereſt and Pretences of the Church of *Rome*, we immediately meet it. For when Doctrines are multiplied and entangled, and men wheedled into apprehenſions that their Salvation dependeth upon their right belief in every one of them; then will they be glad to ſhelter their unſatisfied Conſciences in the boſom of that Church which promiſeth them ſafety: But if any be ſo bold as to queſtion That Fundamental, and thereby ſhake the Power and Greatneſs which is built upon it, however ſlight the matter of the Queſtion be, the very queſtioning of the Church's Determinations is damnable, the man is an Heretick, and as an Heretick he muſt be handled. He muſt be caſt into the Inquiſition-priſon, there he muſt languiſh in darkneſs and naſtineſs, in hunger and cold, and all kinds of miſery, until the Seaſon come for an *Act of Faith*, (for by that Title they expreſs their *Oyer* and *Terminer*, which is moſtly but *Triennial:*) then is the Wretch put upon his Trial, and if found guilty, hs is arrayed in a Coat painted with Fire and Devils, wherein he is burnt alive; and the People are made to believe, That after death he muſt ſuffer in Hell what is ſo repreſented in his Coat, and executed upon his Body; and he muſt loſe what all other Malefactors enjoy, the charity of their Prayers.

This they call an *Act of Faith*, and is ſolemnly executed upon as many as that Holy Court of Inquiſition can get into their Pounces.

God be bleſſed, thoſe curſt Cows have ſhort Horns; That Court reacheth not all Countries, but the Uncharitableneſs of *Rome* doth. There is no reproach ſo great as that of Heretick: to be out of the Boſom of the Church, is to be out of God's Favour, he is hated of God, and muſt be ſo of all that love God.

Such is the effect of multiplying Articles of Faith.

IV. It is exalted above, and againſt REASON: and ſo deſtroyeth the foundation whereon it ſelf is built: For we have found this to be the eſſential virtue of Faith, that it is juſtice to God's Faithfulneſs: and this is therefore moſt juſt, becauſe moſt reaſonable.

Nor is it leſs true in the retail: Nothing is to be believed further than Reaſon proveth it to be true. Our Lord himſelf appealed to it for the belief which he required: He pleaded his Miracles for Evidence, and thence claimed Judgment.

Yea, thoſe who require us to renounce our Reaſon, appeal to it themſelves: For they pretend to give us reaſon why we ſhould renounce it, and ſo contradict themſelves no leſs than they do Reaſon. They are indeed no better than the Ravings in *Bedlam* which we hear: It was a caſt of *Tertullian*'s Montaniſm which tranſported him into ſuch extravagance as to ſay, *Credo quia impoſſibile eſt.* And the Author of *Religio Medici*, when he ſaid, *There are not Contradictions enough in Religion for an Active Faith*, might have remember'd, that exceſs of Confidence in defect of Reaſon, is a certain ſymptom of Madneſs.

It is true, in all Subjects, in all Arts and Sciences, Reaſon is pleaded for Error; but again it is confuted by greater Reaſon, as Stars are by the Sun, which baffleth and ſilenceth their weaker Light.

Abraham believed in Hope againſt Hope. It appeared impoſſible in Nature that *Iſaac* ſhould be a Father after he were ſacrificed: but it appeared more impoſſible, that God ſhould lie, than that he ſhould do more than Nature: What I know to be the Word of God, I believe infinitely, becauſe I infinitely know God to be infinitely True: But that This is God's Word, and This the meaning of it, I ſo far only believe, as I find Reaſon for it: For as in juſtice to God's revealed Word, I am bound to pay it my utmoſt belief; ſo in juſtice to his Word written in my heart, I am to refuſe my belief, till ſome evidence make it appear due.

You ſay, Religion hath *Myſteries*; let us therefore conſider what a *Myſtery* is. In the Old Teſtament we find not the word; in the New, we find it conſiſt in two parts; the one Open, the other Secret. Sometimes it ſignifieth a Spiritual Truth wrapt up in a Senſible; thus the Union of Chriſt with his Church, is a Myſtery contained in that of a Man with his Wife. Sometimes a truth hidden from ſome *Ages*; thus St. *John* proclaimeth the Goſpel to have been *hidden from the beginning*, but then *made manifeſt:* Or from ſome *Perſons*; thus our Lord ſaith to his Diſciples, *to you is given to know the Myſteries of the Kingdom of God, but to others in Parables.*

And this is the moſt uſual Senſe of the word in *Pagan* Writers, and from them with ſome other of their Conceits, entertained by ſuch Ages of the Church, as are held in great Veneration. The *Myſta* knew ſome Rules for Religious Worſhip, which he learned from Books locked up in Archieves, not acceſſible to the People; The Fathers of the Chriſtian Church at firſt ſo imitated them, as to hide from the Catechumens the Rights of Sacraments, which from thence took the name of the Myſteries; and herein they were ſo cautious of concealing the form of Adminiſtring the Euchariſt eſpecially, that they durſt not commit the words to writing, ſo much as in a Letter to a Biſhop, leſt they might by ſome accident fall into uncapable hands. And after-ages came cloſer up to their Pattern, by telling the Laity, that implicit Faith in the Church muſt ſatisfy them in Myſteries of Faith.

So

So the word plainly importeth two contrary Aſpects upon two different Perſons; hid to the one, and open to the other: But that it ſhould at the ſame Time, and to the ſame Perſons, be both hid and open, is more than a hidden Myſtery; it is an open Contradiction, and it is no leſs ſo, that I muſt believe what is hidden from my underſtanding.

If the Goſpel profeſs it ſelf to be a Revealer of Myſteries, then, to tell me, that it concealeth ſome Truths as Myſteries, yet requireth me to believe them; this is no leſs a calumny upon the Goſpel, than an abuſe of the Word.

He that telleth the Laity, that they muſt be ſatisfied with implicit Faith in the Church, ſpeaketh the language of a Pagan Myſtagogue; but a faithful Preacher of the Goſpel muſt juſtify himſelf to his People in the language of St. *Paul* to the Elders of *Epheſus*, I *have kept back nothing that was profitable for you.*

Some may judg of ſuch a Church as boaſteth of Myſteries, by what is written in *Rev.* 17. and take That for a ſummary Anſwer to our preſent Enquiry, concerning the *changes which later Ages have made in the Faith and Church of Chriſt:* From ſimple Nakedneſs, to Gold, Purple, Scarlet, and precious Stones; from plain Truth preached and believed by the meaneſt, to Myſteries; from the moſt affectionate *Love*, to *Drunkenneſs with the Blood of Saints*; from the chaſt Spouſe of Chriſt, to a *great Whore, and Mother of Harlots.* But what Truth may lie in ſuch a cenſure, we may find more fully by our next Enquiry.

ENQUIRY III.

What Damages or Advantages have enſued upon the Changes and Additions which later Ages have made in the Goſpel?

THis Enquiry is double, and requires a Ballance, that in one Scale we may lay the *Damages*, in the other the *Advantages*, and ſo weigh the one againſt the other.

Firſt then, we will conſider the *Damages*, and Them in relation to Three ſubjects:

1. *To our Lord and his Goſpel.*
2. *To private Chriſtians in particular.*
3. *To the Chriſtian Church in general.*

1. *To our Lord's Honour*, theſe Changes bring as great Damages, and in as proper a ſence, as any contumelious Doctrines can: They repreſent him not as a good and wiſe Prince, whoſe Laws tend to the happineſs of his People; but as a capricious and humorious one, that without any other motive than his unaccountable Will, impoſeth a ſtupid belief, of a multitude of impertinent and incredible Propoſitions, without, yea (ſome of them) againſt all Reaſon, without any other Fruit but (what he moſt hateth) ſtrife, contary to that ſimplicity wherein the Goſpel glorieth, and to the contempt which God himſelf ſheweth to Acts of meer underſtanding.

In reference to the Animal Life, we find that he meaſureth to us Knowledg by our Needs. Though we can hardly know any thing to the bottom, yet we know ſufficient to anſwer the requires of our life. Thouſands of Years paſſed, before it was queſtioned, whether the Earth or the Sun move, and it is ſtill a queſtion. The

Discoveries of the Telescope and Microscope are new, yet do they both shew us admirable News, one in a multitude of unthought-of Stars, the other in a World of wonderful pretty Beauties: And the many Discoveries which Anatomy hath lately made in our Bodies, do not so much contribute to our knowledg as our wonder, nor at all instruct us in the Operation of our Bodies or Minds. The same Conduct is visible in reference to Spiritual Life: Our Lord hath plainly revealed, and required us to believe, what is sufficient for the Divine Life; but in Questions no way serviceable thereto, Innocence, Ignorance, yea, and Error, will no more destroy our Souls, than an Error in Philosophy will our Bodies.

But that he should require exact and confident belief in every Question, which a ranging invention can startle; that he should by his Apostle require us to *avoid fooliſh queſtions, as knowing that they gender ſtrife*, yet to believe the truth in every one of them; that to prevent our mistakes in such forbidden Questions, he should establish an Oracle, which at pleasure might coin them into Articles of Faith; these are such Contradictions both among themselves, and to the Wisdom of God, that no Error can be more dishonourable to him, than so vile a conceit of his conduct.

If further we descend to particulars, take an Inventory of the thus imposed new Articles of Faith, their irreconcileable opposition with the plainest Sense and Reason, their impudent pimping for the Priests Interests, their extravagant impertinence to any other end, *&c.* and then compare such a Gospel, with that gracious one which our Lord and his Apostles preached; we shall find greater cause of wonder, that the Professors of Christ's Religion should so impudently corrupt it, than that God should so change his countenance toward it, as in our Introduction we saw reason both to complain and justify.

The Faith which at first prevailed over the World, was no less suitable to the *Nature*, than to the *Needs* of Mankind. That every Man needed a *Mediator* between a holy God and himself, every Man's own guilty conscience convinced him; that *the Son of God came into the World*, to perform that necessary Office, promising pardon and everlasting Life to those that would believe in him as such; was a Doctrine so easy to the understanding, so welcome to the desires, and so obligingly offered, that as soon as it courted the World, it won upon it.

But had the Apostles brought the modern Gospel either to the learned *Greeks* or rude *Barbarians*, told them, that God had sent his Son into the World to save them that would believe, not only in Himself, but in his Vicar too; should they then have opened their Packs of impertinent Mysteries, declared that some Men thereto first qualified by a few words, should afterward by other five words turn a bit of Bread into the Body of God, which himself and others must first worship, and then eat, *&c.* If such stuff as this have been preached, and such credulity as cannot be justified from folly, made the condition whereon Men must hope to be justified from all their sins; what considering Man would not rather stick to the Religion of his Fathers, whatever it were, than change it for one so much worse?

Yes! such a Religion must appear much worse than any other; for the Apo-

Apologists, who upon this Topick pleaded for the Christian Religion against the Pagan, though they sufficiently exposed the gross Follies of the later, yet could not charge it with so many and gross ones, as those which swarm in that one Doctrine of Transubstantiation; nor hath *Mahomet*, among all his Whimsies, any thing comparable to it.

What wonder now that the Gospel cannot gain any Country upon Heathenism? and hath lost so many to Mahumetism? yea, what wonder if in its own bowels it suffer so much by Atheism? What wonder that no Religion is so much pestered by it as the Christian, no Country so much as that, where this Oracle hath its seat?

When a bold person heareth his Teacher avow, that it were as good be of no Religion at all, as of any other than That, of whose Corruptions he is convinced, (though to an indifferent understanding nothing be more incredible, yet) his Lust will soon perswade him to take the Doctor at his word, and reject all Religion for the sake of the corrupt one.

If therefore Heathenism, Mahumetism, or Atheism, be enemies to the Gospel; the Changes which later Ages have made in it, must be imputed to their Authors, as so many Trespasses against it, and be condemned in suitable Damages.

II. As the changes made in the Faith are dishonourable to our Lord and his Gospel, so are they *pernicious to the Church of Christ*, both in its *particular Members*, and its *Publick Body* as the Spouse of Christ.

1. *They are pernicious to private Christians*, by robbing them of much of that happiness which the Gospel is designed to bring them, which we have found to be, 1. *Participation of the Divine Nature*: 2. *Fulness of Joy*.

1. They rob good Men of much of *that Godliness*, which otherwise they should have attained. The Apostle beseecheth us *as strangers and Pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul.* That War is made by Diversion: *Wine and Women take away the heart*; they divert the Soul from labouring for the Divine Life, to wallowing in the brutish; and were it possible to compute how much mischief every Lust doth this way, we should certainly find that no One, nor (perhaps) All together, would be found so pernicious as this One Lust of Disputing and Imposing: For by this One, all the rest are so far strengthened, as our Forces are diverted from warring against them.

The more we dispute against our *Brethren*, the less we dispute against our *Lusts*: that ardor of Zeal, which else would have flamed up in Divine Love, moulders away in the black smoaky heats of bitter Zeal.

Very happy sure must the great Disputers be, whose Lusts are so mortified, that can spare so much of their Time and Affections, to be plaid away at this push-pin: or very unhappy, if they waste so much of them both, while their Lusts remain unconfuted: yea, they are unhappy if, having baffled their Lusts, they lose so much of Joy, and of encrease in Godliness, as with the same labour, and infinitely greater benefit, they might have purchased.

The greatest part of mankind (we see) hath not souls large enough to entertain both sorts of Zeal: but look how much there is of zeal for what they think Faith, against what they call Heresy, so much is lost from

Love of God and our Neighbour, and from Reformation of the moſt mortal Errors of our Lives.

2. They rob good Men of that *fulneſs of Joy* which is the deſign of the Goſpel. *The wicked* (ſaith the Prophet) *are like the troubled Sea which cannot reſt, whoſe Waters caſt up mire and dirt.* If it be miſerable to be toſſed with ſtorms, then are Diſputes in matters of Faith miſerably pernicious; not only by hindering Mens minds from warring againſt the luſts which raiſe thoſe ſtorms, but by raiſing others no leſs tempeſtuous; between Faith impoſing things incredible, and Reaſon reſiſting ſuch Impoſitions.

Where is that conſidering Perſon who eſcapeth thoſe Storms? There are that tell us ſtories of the Roman Prieſts themſelves, that they frequently confeſs, that all their ſtruglings cannot ſubdue their Reaſon to a belief of the Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation, and that their Confeſſors alſo in their turns confeſs the ſame to their Confeſſors; but cannot either give or receive ſuch Penance as can remove the incurable evil. What Conflicts muſt ſuch contrary Winds neceſſarily raiſe in a Soul infinitely deſirous and equally unable to believe!

Moraliſts promiſe us Peace and Joy if we ſubdue our Luſts. Apoſtles upon better warrant make us the ſame Promiſes. Alas! now we find another, and that an invincible Enemy, made of that very Friend, by whoſe help we were to have obtained that Victory. By help of good Reaſon, aſſiſted by God's Grace, we may ſubdue our Luſts; but how ſhall we ſubdue our Reaſon, which as it is our own Nature, without which we cannot be Men, ſo it is the Image of God, and like its Original, Immortal and Invincible? Muſt we deface God's Image that we may partake his Nature? Fight againſt him *in effigie*, that we may obey him in his Vicar? This were to perform contradictions that we may believe them, and we ſhall find the one no leſs above our ſtrength than the other; but after all endeavours, either to ſatisfy or ſtupify our minds, we ſhall never be able to quiet them.

A hard warfare indeed! Firſt by our Reaſon we muſt fight againſt our Luſts; and then by Faith we muſt fight our Reaſon; which yet we muſt find Invincible, and ſo the War deſperate.

Is it thus, *The Peace of God paſſeth all underſtanding*? Muſt we out-run *all underſtanding*, that we may overtake *Peace*? Is it thus, that *believing we rejoice with Joy unſpeakable and glorious*? Or is this the *good fight of Faith*, which we are by the Apoſtle encouraged to fight, and by experience find unproſperous?

Another, and no leſs unhappy War, do theſe additional Doctrines raiſe toward our Brethren, whom they tempt us to hate and perſecute, under pretence of anſwering St. *Jude*'s Alarm, *to contend earneſtly for the Faith.* Something of this we have ſeen under the conſideration that *Faith is exalted above Charity*, and ſomething more we ſhall ſee in obſerving the miſchiefs which accrue to the Church of Chriſt in its *publick capacity*, to which therefore we haſten without ſtop at the mutual Enmities between private Chriſtians, however viſible and lamentable.

III. The next ſubject of damage is the *Church of Church in its general capacity:* and this indeed is concerned in all the reſt. For the Community, which is the Catholick Church, is the Spouſe

Spouſe of Chriſt, whoſe happineſs is the adequate end of the Goſpel, whoſe every Promiſe and Precept is imployed as a Means to ſerve it, and therefore whatever croſſeth this good Deſign, if it come from our Lord, muſt diſhonour his Conduct.

Again, the Catholick Church is a Body compact of ſingle Members, whoſe ſeveral happineſs or pain affecteth the whole.

Whether our Lord hath been faithful or defective in his care for the happineſs of every particular, and the whole Community, how ſhall we examine? If by his own and his Apoſtles Precepts, no Religion in the World could ever vie with the Goſpel, either in Precepts or Arguments for the deareſt love, the greateſt happineſs of the Church, as well Triumphant as Militant: If by the practice of its Profeſſors, none ever ſtirred up ſuch mutual Quarrels among private Perſons, ſuch cruel Perſecutions by Princes, ſuch bloody Wars between Nations.

Our Lord indeed appointed it for an Incendiary, but its Fires were to be thoſe of the moſt ardent Love: it is from the Corruptions of later Ages, that thoſe lambent flames are by bitter zeal changed to devouring fires. Our Lord's great Apoſtle ſaith, that *in Chriſt Jeſus nothing availeth but Faith working in Love*; but his pretended Vicar ſaith, Nothing availeth but Faith working by Zeal, and the beſt Zeal is the moſt bitter.

The Armies which blind zeal raiſed for the recovery of the Holy Land from Infidels, have been diverted by this *bitter zeal*, for the corrupters of the Chriſtian Faith, againſt the oppoſers of thoſe Corruptions; and Pardon of ſin promiſed to ſuch as ſhould loſe their lives in ſo holy a Cauſe; wherein how many have been deſtroyed, who can compute? Some have done their endeavours, who give us this account.

Of *Albigenſes* and *Waldenſes* ſlain nine hundred thouſand: From thence to the Reformation no Man hath ſet down the account of them that have been cut off, partly by fire, partly by ſword, partly by other torments. From the beginning of the *Jeſuits* to the Year 1580. in little more than thirty Years, *Balduinus* noteth almoſt nine hundred thouſand put to Death by the alone hand of the Executioner. The D. of *Alvia* gloried in the ſlaughter of ſix and thirty thouſand in *Belgium*, only in a few Years. *Vergerius* witneſſeth, that the Inquiſition, in ſcarce thirty Years, conſumed a hundred and fifty thouſand by ſeveral kinds of torments. We cannot ſtop our Ears or Eyes ſo hard, as to avoid the lamentable ſight and complaints of our next Neighbours ſuffering (under him that calleth himſelf *the moſt Chriſtian King*, and glorieth in the atchievement) more than any, yea than all the primitive Chriſtians ſuffered under thoſe whom our Fathers call'd cruel Perſecutors, but this Compariſon will repreſent as mild Princes.

Aſtoniſhment and Grief here ſtop us; we therefore turn to examin what weight the other Scale carrieth.

II. *What advantages accrueth by the changes which later Ages have made in the Faith of the Goſpel.*

Here we muſt crave the grant of two Suppoſitions.

1. *That the Clergy in oppoſition to the People, and the Church of* Rome *in oppoſition to all other Churches, is Chriſt's Spouſe, and conſequently what is gained to that Spouſe, is gained to Chriſt himſelf.*

2. *That the temporal aduantages which accrue to that Spouſe, may be equivalent to the ſouls which may be loſt to purchaſe them.*

Unleſs theſe two ſmall Conceſſions may be granted, we have not a word

to

to say, but if they be, that Church will shew such gains, as if they fall short of the full value, yet shall be sure to avoid the complaint of *David*, that they *sell God's people for nought, and take no money for them.* It is confessed, *Money* in kind, is not so properly the gain made by this part of the Gospel, yet may it be reduced hither: for were not Mens understandings muffled by implicit Faith, they could never be so grossly cheated as they are in the Doctrines of Repentance. But that *house of merchandise* we may take another time to visit; at present we are in pursuit of a nobler game, *Honour* and *Power*; and in these we shall divide the gains as we did the damages. For as in those we considered what accrued to God, and what to Man; so in these we shall *what is gotten to the Pope as Christ's Vicar, and what to inferior Priests as his Officers.*

I. The *Pope*, under the Character of *Christ's Vicar*, by changes and additions made in the Faith of the Gospel, hath gotten that boundless Honour and Power, to which otherwise he hath no pretence.

It is not a word or two of our Lord, strained beyond the mind of the speaker; it is not his *Pasce oves*, or *Tu es Petrus*, that can move a serious Man to any thing but astonishment at such boldness, as dares with intolerable impudence burlesque our Lord's words; but is the pretended necessity of an *infallible Chair*, which hath advanced that Bishop, not only above all other *Bishops*, but above all *Princes* in the World.

For what can set a strand to that Power which can impose upon Mens belief without bounds? What can make such an exorbitant Power credible, if the *Need* appear not great as the *Absurdity*? And what colour of such *Need*, if the bounds of Faith be not enlarged, beyond those narrow ones which our Lord set? but when matters of belief are so multiplied, that it is impossible for a Man of ordinary Business in the World, not only to *understand* them, but even to *number* them; when in most of them, sometimes two, sometimes more parties, contend with equal confidence; and can be brought to no other Argument but in this, that they cannot be too zealous for the Truth; what is this, but a state of War between the Disputants, and of doubts in the by-standers? and how can Peace be obtained without a living Arbitrator?

Thus the disputacity of Doctors made an infallible Chair appear necessary, and those who sit in that Chair, have so far made it infallible, as to determine what is most advantageous to themselves; for they have thereby gained Honour and Power, boundless as their Matters of Faith, and incredible as their Mysteries.

Their (*a*) Canon-law declareth and pretendeth to prove, by *Gen.* 1. that the *Pope is as much greater than the Emperor as the Sun is than the Moon*; and (*b*) *so much better than other Kings, as Gold is better than Lead.* This is modest, if their Power in imposing Faith, be more arbitrary than that of Emperors and Kings in imposing Taxes.

Their Supremacy over other Bishops is derived from the same Fountain. The same unhappy controversy which made others *disputacious*, made the Bishop of *Rome* Supreme. The gain that he made of the entertainment, which he so often gave to *Athanasius* and his Party, was this: He thence took advantage to claim a negative in Councils, and afterward the sole Power of determining Controversies out of Council. And how much he must be above the rest of mankind, which is so much above all other Bishops, we may (I was

(a) *Grec. de major. & obed. c. solita.* (b) *Distinct. 96. c. duo sunt.* about

about to say compute) admire by the next part of our enquiry, the gain of the Priests.

II. The Priests have exalted themselves above the People, as much as the Pope above all Princes and Bishops. That they might keep the Laity at greater distance, they have doubly abused them; first by multiplying and entangling the Doctrines of Faith, and then by with-holding the Light that should clear them: At the same time *surfeiting* them with a glut of Doctrines, and *starving* them with a famine of the Bread of Life. So the Gospel is to them both kinds of Wilderness; bare as the Sands of *Africk* (without Path or Land-mark) for want of Scripture, yet thick-wooded as the Hills of *Zelah* (whose Bushes none can creep through) by multitudes of Doctrines. So that those whom Education hath enabled to understand the Language wherein the Scripture was written, find Scholastick Divinity so overgrown with briars, that they think it better, and are willing to believe those who perswade them so, to lie in ease and ignorance, taking Images for their Books, and Priests for their Oracles, than tire themselves with such entangling studies.

Yea, which is yet more intolerable, they keep the People ignorant, not only of God's Word to them, but of their own to God, locking up their own publick Prayers in the same unknown Tongue with the Scriptures. *Ignorance* (say they) *is the Mother of Devotion:* It is so; but of devotion toward the Priest, not toward God; for where there is no light in the understanding, what heat can there be in the affections? What devotion without love, and what love without some knowledge of the object? St. *John* telleth us, *We love God, because he loved us first*, but then he supposeth we know it. St. *James* requireth, that *we pray in faith*, but he supposeth we know what we ask. But if I depend upon the Priest, both for God's word to me and mine to God, what is he less than God's Oracle, and how much more than my Mediator? And upon either office, the claim that he maketh to my greatest reverence will be as just as it is insolent, which that it is sufficiently, appears by these their demands:

Stanislaus Onicarius saith, That a *common Priest is as much better than a King, as a Man is better than a Beast*; yea further, That *as far as God Almighty doth excel a Priest, so much doth a Priest excel a King* (a). If you desire to know what particular Beast, *Gaspar Schioppius* will inform you: *Lay-men* (saith he) *are Asses, Mules, or Horses, the Romanist is tame Ass, the Heretick a wild one* (b). *Catholick Kings are the Leading-asses with Bells*, Reges Catholici sunt asini cum tintinnabulo. Thank them heartily? We *Hereticks* are the wiser, that keep our selves (*wild*, as they call it) free, as Nature made us; not suffer our selves to be sadled, laden with burdens, whereof we know nothing but the heaviness, driven we know not whither, nor why, and lashed by insolent Masters. Such usage is enough to make those turn wild, whom Education hath tamed.

The Proverb telleth us, That *did the Horse know his own strength, he would not endure such usage as now he doth*: And what hindereth us from knowing the strength of our own mind? We have the same Scripture, we have the same Faculties whereby to understand it, and we have more certainty of our own sincerity than we can have of our Masters: what hindereth us from taking the blessed King's advice, not to take our Religion from other

(a) *Chimera. fol.* 97. (b) *Ecclesiasticus, cap.* 147.

Mens

Mens Traditions, but our own Judgments?

If we can have the boldneſs to believe this, which even our Riders cannot deny, that nothing can be matter of ſaving Faith, but what the Author of our Faith made ſo; and that the Scripture hath faithfully informed us of what he ſaid in that great point; we may ſoon know our ſelves to be no leſs infallible than the Pope pretendeth to be: And if we can as eaſily ſhake off the loads which our Luſts impoſe, as thoſe which the Schoolmen do; we may then enjoy that true liberty, whereof our Redeemer ſaith, *If the Son make you free, you ſhall be free indeed.*

The CONCLUSION.

THE end of all is to determine between Faith *and* Love, *as our Lord did between God and Ceſar*, Give unto Faith the things that are Faith's, and unto Love the things that are Love's; *to Faith its due Bounds, and to Love its due boundleſſneſs; to Faith the praiſe of a good Servant, and to Love the honour of a good Lord; to Faith the power of advancing Love, but not of reſtraining it. For thus doth the Apoſtle extend it,* Do good to all, eſpecially to thoſe that are of the houſhold of Faith: *Which Houſhold alſo the ſame Apoſtle extendeth to* All which confeſs the Lord Jeſus, and believe that God hath raiſed him from the dead. *And if any (not ſatisfied with their place in the Houſe) will needs build themſelves Huts of* Wood, Hay, *or* Stubble, *it will deſtroy their Works with ſuch Fires as ſhall ſpare their Perſons.*

This is the ſingular Honour of the Reformers of our Church, this maketh it the beſt conſtituted Church in the World, that in her departure from the Corruptions of Rome, *ſhe departed not from Charity.*

We are now conſidering none of her Conſtitutions, but thoſe which concern Faith, which both in the Office for Baptiſm, and that for Viſitation of the ſick, ſhe plainly declareth not to extend beyond the ſimpleſt of all the Creeds: whence it muſt neceſſarily follow, that if any-where elſe ſhe have ſaid or inſtituted any thing, that may appear repugnant to thoſe declarations, it muſt be thereby interpreted, and imputed to her imitation of the great Apoſtle's Conduct, becoming a Papiſt to the Papiſts, that by all means ſhe might gain ſome of the Papiſts. *For this good reaſon, in her Liturgy ſhe kept their beſt Collects, whatever was juſtifiable in their Litany, and all their Creeds; in her Rubricks, many of their Feaſts, moſt of their Faſts, and ſome of their Ceremonies: And the ſucceſs juſtified this conduct, till a Bull from* Rome *blaſted the Fruit which ſuch fair Bloſſoms promiſed.*

But ſince that time, as ſhe hath gotten none from Rome, *ſo hath ſhe on the other ſide loſt many of her own, whoſe narrower Souls could not ſwallow ſuch things, as were in no other relation valuable, but what they carried to ſo good an end; and now more than an hundred Years experience calleth upon the ſame Charity, to tack about and ſteer a contrary courſe. It is a general Rule, and practiſed by all good Phyſicians, to obſerve whether their Preſcriptions do more good or hurt; nor would he be faithful either to his Patient or Profeſſion, that ſhould obſtinately ſtick to his firſt Orders, in contradiction to experience. It hath pleaſed our Gracious King to Invite and Authorize the Prelates and Repreſentatives of our Church, to practiſe the ſame Charity toward our diſtempered Church and State; and it will be a great diſappointment both to His Majeſty and his good People, if ſo glorious an Opportunity prove fruitleſs: nor will thoſe who glory in the Character of* Church-of-England-men *make good their claim to it, if they really diſhonour her by renouncing her Spirit of Charity, ſuppoſing to honour her by their ſtiffneſs to thoſe Conſtitutions, whoſe very Authors (were they now living, and true to their own Reaſon) muſt be willing to aboliſh them.*

FINIS.

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